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PUBLISHED
THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

Gordon Young
Anthony M. Rud
J. Allan Dunn
Joel Townsley Rogers
F. R. Buckley
Dale Collins

Raymond S. Spears
Mary Shannon
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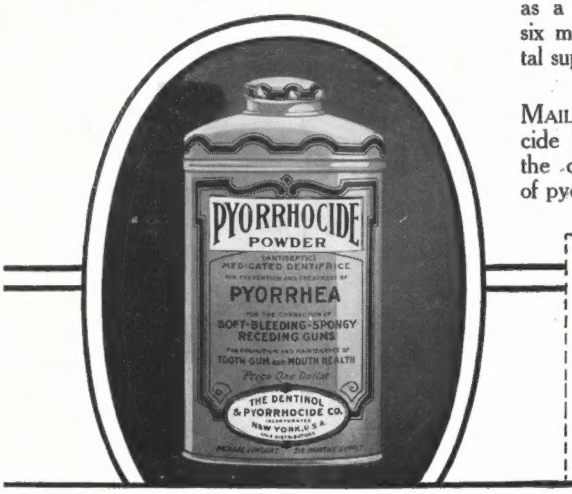

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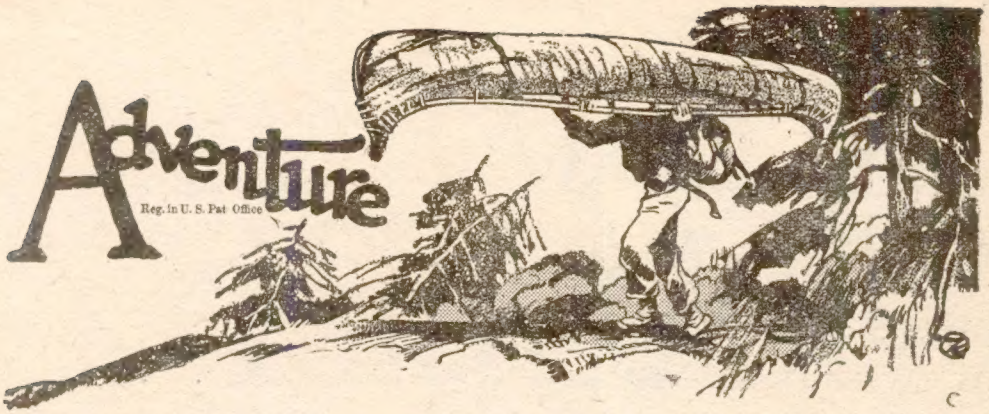

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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Cover Design . . . . . **C. C. Illers**

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of *Adventure*, published three times a month at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1923. State of New York, County of New York, *ss.* Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared JAMES F. BIRMINGHAM, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the business manager of the *Adventure* and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher: THE RIDGWAY COMPANY, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. Editor, ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, 223 Spring Street, New York City. Managing Editor, None. Business Manager, JAMES F. BIRMINGHAM, 223 Spring Street, New York City. 2. That the owners are: (Give names and addresses of individual owners, or, if a corporation, give its name and the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of the total amount of stock.) *Owner:* THE RIDGWAY COMPANY, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. *Stockholders:* FEDERAL PUBLISHING COMPANY, a corporation, 15 Exchange Place, Jersey City, N. J.; stockholder of FEDERAL PUBLISHING COMPANY: THE BUTTERICK COMPANY, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City; stockholders of BUTTERICK COMPANY: GEORGE B. BLACK, 812 Lincoln Avenue, Mendota, Ill.; C. D. BARNEY & Co., 15 Broad Street, New York City; JOHN M. DONINGTON, 37 Wall Street, New York City; CHARLES A. EDWARDS, 45 Wall Street, New York City; W. H. GELSHENEN, 100 William Street, New York City; S. R. Latshaw, Butterick Building, New York City; J. H. OLIPHANT & Co., 61 Broadway, New York City; LAURA J. O'LOUGHLIN, 514 West 114th Street, New York City; MRS. ARETHUSA POND, 575 Riverside Drive, New York City; ABBY L. WILDER, 43 5th Avenue, New York City; B. F. WILDER, Butterick Building, New York City; C. D. WILDER, Butterick Building, New York City; G. W. WILDER, Butterick Building, New York City. 3. *That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.)* None. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. 5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the six months preceding the date shown above is (This information is required from daily publications only.) (Signed) JAMES F. BIRMINGHAM, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 31st day of March, 1923. WM. DEWAR, Jr., Notary Public. (SEAL) Form 3526.—Ed. 1916.

June 20, 1923 Adventure Vol. XLI. No. 2.

THE FOOL KILLER*

A Complete Novel

by

Joel Townsley Rogers

Author of "Lovers' Gold from Turon," "Mail for the Whirlwind," etc.

WHISTLES blew all night. All night they screamed. And hoarse bells whanged and rang with intermittent clamor. Sharp and loud, and heavy and loud, they shivered and shook in the night. Every man who heard them grew afraid.

"Be warned!" you could hear the loud bells tolling, over the river, and over the hills, and over the towns. "Be warned! A killer is broken from Sing Sing. From Sing Sing a killer is gone. He'll get you before the morning!"

Men late abroad in the cold mysterious night paused, and listened, and shook their heads; then hurried on, casting sharp and timid glances at the apprehensive shadows of bushes. Women sleeping deep in warm beds, in guarded homes, behind well-locked doors, awoke and listened tremblingly to those stammering, hammering bells while the hours of night went by.

When a killer is broken clean from Sing Sing jail, when a known murderer is free in the night, it is an ominous sound to hear the creak and creep of stairs, it is a deathly thing to see a bush whose twigs twist like a strangling hand.

In Doom Vale, a little town across the Hudson from Sing Sing, the town marshal awoke at hearing the distant water-borne bells. He pattered in his bare feet to the front part of his butcher shop, where a telephone was loudly jangling.

**This is an Off-the-Trail Story.* *See first contents page.*

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The butcher-marshal's name was Nibbick Craven. Craven's white nightgown flapped. He stood with cold-curled toes listening to the message which came over the telephone at the dead of night.

On the walls of his shop carcasses of beeves were hung; spectral streaks of fat outlined their ribs, and about them lingered the unappeased ghosts of slaughtered cows. A cockroach with dragging, loathsome legs ran over Craven's instep. The feel of that vile insect, and the hung bodies of the bovine dead, and all the shivering stillness of the night brought a pale whistle to Craven's lips.

Bravely he whistled, not knowing the tune. "They're a-Hanging Danny Deever in the Mornin'!" he was whistling. When he realized that, he closed his lips sharply.

With burly arms wrapped about his chest Craven stood in the door, looking out on the shadows of Black Street. From the Red House, over which now a whispering and wicked silence had come, Nathan Cass, the gambler and libertine, was rolling home.

"Hey, Nat!" whispered Craven. "A guy's broke loose from Sing Sing. Hear 'em ring the bells!"

To his own ears his voice sounded thin and small.

"Hey, Nat! Hey, Nat! This guy got a guard and beat it away."

Nathan Cass leaned against a tree. He pulled at the lobe of a smashed, bulbous ear.

"Why don't you wear your pants?" he snorted.

"Hey, Nat! I wonder if it could be that fellow Nero Cram?"

"Nero Cram?"

"Do you reckon it could be Nero Cram?"

"How do I know? I don't know," said Cass. "Who did they say it was?"

"I didn't get the name," said Craven. "It was Warden Drew talking. Do you reckon it could be Cram?"

"I don't know. But I'd like to get that fellow Cram."

"If he killed a guard, they'll send him to the chair," grunted Craven. "And then he'll get his."

Craven shivered yet, but though his teeth were clacking from the chill he began to laugh.

"When they catch him they'll send him to the chair!"

"If they catch him," muttered Nathan Cass, tugging at two gold dice upon his waistcoat watch-chain.

"Well, sure they'll catch him. And he'll catch it good and plenty."

"Nero Cram can't catch too much to suit me," said Cass. "I don't care what he catches. But I hope he don't catch me!"

When Cass had gone on, Craven stood for moments more staring out at the cold night. He saw a creeping, hunched, swift shape go down the far side of Black Street, and recognized in that old gray man old Nigus Cairnstone, the money-lender, undertaker, furniture upholsterer, and second-hand man.

"Hey, Mr. Cairnstone! A guy broke out of Sing Sing, and they think it's Nero Cram! Your boy had better watch out! I say, he'd better watch out! Cram will try to get him!"

Old Cairnstone did not pause the weasel swiftness of his walk.

"Yeh? Yeh? Well, Nebulus is in New York now, and it would take a lot of finding to find him. Don't you be afraid of Nero Cram."

"I'm not afraid of nothing," declared Nibbick Craven. "Not of nothing!"

"Yeh? Yeh?" said gray old Cairnstone, hurrying and scurrying on till shadows covered him.

THE last ferry-boat left Tarrytown to go across the Hudson at one hour past midnight. The bells had not then begun to ring; the escape of the killer had not been discovered. The night was cold, but no wind blew, and the surface of the river was slick like black glass.

With the gates beginning to rattle shut, and the engines of the ferry-boat chugging and groaning, a man leaped down the dock and aboard the boat. Then the engines snorted more loudly, water heaved and hissed and slavered at the dock piles, and the shore slid away from the ferry-boat.

The hat of the man blew from his head and sank in the stern suck. He leaned over the rail, watching the frothy waves pull it down. The man's head shone bare and white; it was hairless as an egg. Because his hair had apparently been but recently shaved off, his scalp was paler than his face. It looked like one of those close, tight, skull-fitting caps worn by whitewashed clowns.

Yet his face was not clownish. His jaw was grim, his eyes narrowed and straight-staring, and there was a soft steadiness in the way he walked which was like a strong jungle cat.

The man did a curious thing. He selected a match with some care from a box and put it between his lips. Then he struck a cigaret against its box till it crumpled. The absurdity of his action came to him. He threw the match and cigaret away, and the box of cigarets and the box of matches.

"Wrong side to," he thought. "Take it easy! What's wrong with the nerve, old Oren? Take it easy! Think again. No one ever accused Marc Oren of nerves."

Debating this, thinking simple and careful and exact thoughts, Oren walked toward the bow. In the narrow fore-and-aft gangway amidships he approached a deck-hand. Oren stepped to the left, and the man crashed into him and fell.

"Why didn't you step to the right?" asked Oren, shaken by the shock.

The boatman gathered himself on his feet, spurting ripe and voluminous curses.

"Right! Right! How about right? Step to the right yourself, sir."

Oren walked on, and the boatman heard him muttering slowly, watching his feet—

"Right—left—right——"

The boatman grinned with the withering wisdom of the imbecile.

"Crazy as a cootie, that bird!"

Before the ferry had reached the western shore Oren approached the boatman again.

"I'm sorry," he said with candor. "I wasn't thinking. I meant to go to the right."

"It's all right," muttered the boatman, sorry and ashamed to see a gentleman admit an error. "It ain't no disgrace to take a drink now. I could see you didn't go to knock me down. But you sure hit me for a gool."

Oren did not offer him a quarter-dollar, and for that the boatman was fiercely, fraternally proud. He was a white man, an American and a gentleman. And other gentlemen did not offer him small change because they had knocked him down.

"If you're going far without your hat, sir," he said, "I might lend you the loan of— Where did you say you were going, sir?"

Oren looked keenly at the boatman and hesitated. The boatman wondered whether he knew where he was going.

"I'm going back," said Oren at last.

"Back across the river, sir?"

Oren shook his head again, and plainly he didn't know just where he was going.

"No," he said slowly; "I'm just going back."

"Well, that might be a long way," said the boatman.

Oren stuck his hands in his pockets and frowned.

"Don't know that I'm sure just how far it is," he said. "This is the west shore, isn't it? And is that north? No, New York lies that way. That's north. I knew it."

"Never too far to go back if somebody's hoping to see you," grinned the boatman, now quite sure Oren was drunk.

Oren still frowned.

"I don't think they'll be glad to see me," he pondered. "But they'll be expecting me. I said I'd come back."

Then the ferry-boat ran into its slip. The boatman was busied directing automobiles from the boat to the dock. He forgot Oren, forgot his expression, his looks, forgot all about him. And when hours later the guards from Sing Sing would be asking for convict 5521, who had got away, the boatman would remember nothing.

Oren walked up to the railroad station, going steadily and swiftly along the dark streets of Nyack.

"One ticket for Doom Mountain," he demanded.

"You mean Doom Vale, mister?"

"That's it—Doom Vale."

"No trains till morning, mister."

"Then I'll walk," said Oren.

He started off with his steady and swift pace, while the station-master shouted emptily behind him.

THEN shrill and clear from far Sing Sing rose and roared the whistles.

"*Who! Who!*" they wailed. "*Who-o!*" they howled. "Who will the Killer do for now?"

Like demoniacal sound made visible, like howling incarnate, the blasts of the sirens streaked down the cold sky. They curled diabolic quavering claws; they ripped at the entrails of the night; they tore their breasts with laughter.

"Who! Who is the Killer! Where will he go?"

What was the shadow dropping behind that tree? What was the stirring of that bush? What was that slinking like a giant rat behind the graveyard shadows? It's a

man! He's the Killer! He's running swift as a panther!

Away, away from him! He'll make you mad with his terrible crimson eyes. He'll pounce on you in the darkness. He'll rip you with his teeth. He'll get you!

Men abroad that night opened wide the throttles of their cars, or beat their horses till the whips broke, or lifted up their knees and ran. Immobile trees caused men to curse and quake. Bushes stirred by timid toads brought forth groans of terror. Many a white-tailed rabbit watched men in death horror flee away from it.

But the terror of the weakest heart was not so great as the terror of the Killer. The posses were hard behind him. Daylight would betray him.

In the woods, or in the river, in the hills or the orchards or the brush, the posses would run him down. They would seize him, loud though he might scream. They would get him, fierce though he might fight. And that would be the end, the terrible end of him.

As he ran the Killer, horror of all men, bit his lips till his teeth closed. Tonight it might be, or tomorrow night, or in a year of nights; but whatever was the night, soon or late, they'd get him. He looked this way and that. They'd get him. He knew it as he knew day ends night.

In his frantic, terrorized heart the Killer thought—

"I'll not die alone!"

He grew calm. All his hidden forces of craft, all of caution, he summoned to their utmost. His eyes grew cunning, and shone with that murderous merriment seen in the eyes of so many laughing men. He dared to think he could outwit the men who followed him, outwit them forever.

As a rat runs to its hole again, or a snake streaks for its den again, the Killer made for Doom Vale across the Hudson.

TELEPHONES jangled, warning officers of police such as Nibbick Craven in all towns and cities. Loudly hooting, and glaring with eyes of flame, automobiles raced north and south. Clicking keys aroused telegraph men. Trainmen were warned. The keepers of bridges and toll-gates sat with pistols in their hands, peering steadily into the black. The hands of every man were lifted against the Killer. No space was vast enough, no hole secret enough, to hide him. Squads of men explored field and thicket, flashing lights right and left, holding guns ready.

"Who's there! Who's there! Who's there! We got you!"

Nothing but shadows.

Across the river twinkled lights, lights of trolley lines, lights of trains, the last lights of sleeping towns. Black water soughed. Night boats went up and down, soft-sliding sailing-boats and coughing motor-boats and big steamers throbbing like the ocean. As the steamers passed, giant unseen waves beat on the river-banks with loud and sudden roars. Cold, lean searchlights from the shore and the steamers combed the Hudson as a woman's fingers comb her black hair.

The searching posses found a truck with bootleg liquor; they found a gang of fifty men throwing dice by the light of oil lanterns on hard-packed circles of earth in a wood; they found a young girl whom a carload of New York toughs had left by the river-side, and a man sneaking home from seeing his neighbor's wife, and a lunatic wandering down dismal country lanes shouting:

"God is coming! Prepare! Prepare!"

They found a strayed cow galloping along and dangling its tinny bell. They found a stolen car and a pair of sweethearts and a dead man. They found Duke Adair, the handsome cocain-runner, swellest dresser in New York's Cherry Hill, lying stripped and stark, robbed of his clothes; and beside him the prison uniform of convict 5521, the Killer.

For long hours after 5521 had broken free Major Drew, brother of Warden Drew, lay on his back mumbling:

"O holy Judas! When will this long watch end?"

Warden Drew watched him silently, gripping his hand.

"I'm slated for promotion!" the major groaned.

No other word was intelligible. Yet after he ceased to mumble bubbles of froth still came from his lips. That was a strange thing in even a man so hardy and strong, for with a carpenter's awl the Killer had struck out both his eyes, piercing his brain in two places.

Swiftly the prison surgeons worked, with bracelets of blood about their wrists. But with the morning Major Drew was a dead man.

At the passing of Major Drew convict 5521 became the Killer. He had no more to lose. His life was forfeit to the law, his soul to hell. And any man could shoot him down on sight. Yet the prison guards, vicious and silent and loyal to their dead, did not find 5521 in the darkness or the dawn.

The stars were overcast that night. Before the near approach of dawn mists rose on the black river. They towered in tall pillars. They coiled like smoke. Portentously, with tremendous stealth, they crept up the Hudson, past Peekskill, past Doom Vale, up to Albany where the tides end, messengers of madness and terror.

Night breezes stirred the cold gray ghosts to shapes. Now the shape of tall men wrestling, now of lovers embracing together, now of wild horsemen riding furiously to war. Now they seemed the shape of that hard and dangerous man, Nero Cram, who had put the threatening floods in the hills above Doom Vale. Now they twisted to shapes so foul and abominable no man could unriddle their meaning and remain sane.

Hoarse, hoarse the whistles blew through those devil mist shapes twisting. Dimly the searchlights thrust and pointed. Ceaselessly and furiously the guards and the posses of whispering citizens searched shore and river. But they did not find the Killer.

"I thought he'd like to keep the watch one night," said Warden Drew, speaking of his brother. "He's kept many a tougher watch in France. Now look what that dirty sticking dog has done! Well, that's the end of the watch."

His officers grumbled hoarse, burly words of sorrow and passion.

"I'll get that Killer!" swore Drew in thick tones. "I'll kick his face in! I'll strangle him! I'll kill him like a toad!"

But not that night, nor for other nights of terror, did he find the Killer.

ALL night across Doom Vale a heavy shadow stretched and stretched, creeping eastward from the mountains as the small moon declined. When the moon was behind the mountains, when the fringe of the shadow reached the Hudson, the town was overcast with blackness like tar.

Nathan Cass had made his way long since to his solitary home and fallen to a snorting sleep. Nibbick Craven, the butcher-marshal, squinted at figures revolving on the gray haze of his eyelids, figures of slaughtered cows, shapes of murderous men running in the night, the image of Nancy Cass, old Nathan Cass' daughter, whom Craven wanted but could never have.

It was in the chill, small hours of morning that Nigus Cairnstone awoke, and heard outside his bedroom door his black mastiff dog, Night. The black dog scratched and whined. His tail thumped. He growled. He lifted up his throat and barked. Thirteen times he barked. Heavily he barked.

Copper dawn dried up the mists of the dim pre-morn. The burning east of morning grew too hot to look upon. Over Doom Vale shone the sun.

All night walking from Nyack, having gone round about over the hills, high up past Shadow Dam, along the crooked boulders of Lost Man's Lane and down into the valley again, there came with the earliest dawn Marc Oren into Doom Vale.

Old Valuable Perkins, owner of Perkins Inn, was opening up his office. He yawned, and scratched his hairs, and pulled at a loose tooth, all the time cursing Nick, the idiot and dwarf, with a monotonous whine. He was staring out the window at the painted dawn arising over the river, when Marc Oren came in.

Oren came in quickly, not looking behind him. He reached for the register, and dipped a pen, and wrote his name. Valuable Perkins closed one eye in reflection. He had an idea he had seen this man before. But Oren's face was strange to him.

Valuable Perkins disliked and distrusted strangers, though he made his living from them. An air of power and self-sufficiency about Oren, however, the costliness of his clothing, the heavy wrought gold of a jeweled ring on his right hand, all combined to appease Valuable Perkins' doubts. Men who don't pay their bills talk loudly and laugh often; and men who are thieves look continually with cunning, hidden glances about them. Oren said nothing, laughed at nothing, and looked straighforwardly.

"Room on the same floor as bath, two-fifty a night," said Perkins, staring hard at Oren. "Ordinary rooms, two dollars."

Oren had his bare, shaved head bent over the register. It looked like a head of rock. Perkins stared at a ragged white scar which ran half-across the crown of the skull. Oren glanced up, with an air of watchful challenge.

"It looks like rain," said the hotel-keeper uneasily. "Looks like a heavy storm."

Marc Oren glanced cautiously over his shoulder, out of the windows where burned the augmenting dawn. He seemed puzzled, turning over many ideas. When he spoke it was with careful words, answering Perkins literally.

"It looks more like fire to me," he said.

Though he was right, and it was a burning flame which beat on the Hudson and reached forth with scarlet hands to Doom Vale, old Perkins was irritated. Like the boatman on the ferry, he decided Oren was drunk or a fool. And something in the stranger's very manner aroused hate, a narrow and stone hate, in Valuable Perkins.

He turned the register to his breast, and read with mumbling lips Marc Oren's name.

"Where do you come from, Mr. Oren?"

Oren frowned.

"From a hotter place than this," he said, choosing his words with the same care, and seemingly as earnestly puzzled for the truth.

"From the South?" asked old Perkins.

Oren pointed.

"Is that south? Then I come from there."

"From what part of the South, Mr. Oren?" Perkins pursued relentlessly.

"From hell!"

"Hell!" screamed old Valuable Perkins.

Oren's eyes were half-closed.

"Hellburne, Florida," he said deliberately. "Does that please you?"

Perkins felt the loose flesh crawl on his backbone. Those half-closed, steady glances again put him in mind of some one, yet of whom he couldn't think. He knew that he disliked the man, and knew that he didn't want those half-closed, steady glances on him when he was alone, and when night was not yet scoured from out the sky.

So Perkins made a great bustle with a gong on his desk.

"On the job, Nick!" he shouted to the idiot dwarf, to show that he was not alone. "Up with the shades! Let a little light in here, you fool!"

"Fool yourself," muttered Nick.

The sound of the dwarf moving about, and the sight of two or three early citizens walking past Perkins Inn, put Valuable Perkins at his ease.

"Going to be in Doom Vale long, Mr. Oren?" he asked.

"You'll know when I'm ready to go."

"Got some business to attend to, have you, hey?"

After a pause Oren said with his air of apparent puzzlement:

"I don't remember. But I'm reasonably sure I have. Yes, I have business to attend to."

"What's your line?" asked Valuable Perkins.

"Oh, I'm willing to do almost anything," said Oren with great frankness. "I have an idea I'm a pretty good doctor. Or maybe a journalist. Or maybe I sell canned goods. You see, I allow myself plenty of rope."

"You sell rope?" asked Perkins, startled out of his hearing at meeting a man who didn't seem to know just what he was good for.

"No, no. I say, I allow myself plenty of rope."

"Oh!" said Perkins. "Well, I hope you get your business finished."

Oren's lips pressed together.

"I always finish what I set out to do," he said.

"Oh!" said Perkins again. "Thank you, thank you," he added, not knowing why he said it.

He barked at the dwarf Nick, who was sitting by the door trying to whittle a whistle from a dry poplar twig.

"Hey, you fool! Show the gentleman to his room!"

"Fool yourself," Nick's silent lips formed.

By that retort Nick maintained his manhood, his pride in himself as the peer of any one. He was hard and shrewd and watchful. Men in Doom Vale had been cursing him for so long when he was within hearing, and striking blows at him when he was within reach, that it had become a habit; and they cursed or struck absent-mindedly, wrapped in reverie about more important matters.

Never had a man hailed him in fellowship, never said a word of praise, never slapped him on the back or winked at him in fraternity. Once Nancy Cass, the gambler's daughter, had smiled at him, or perhaps had given him a dime. For hours after that Nick had sobbed, and the joke of its sentimental idiot had tickled all Doom Vale.

On short bow legs Nick waddled forward at Valuable Perkins' summons. His face was pimpled, his eyes a humid gray, his lips thick. He tried at all times to wear an air

of determination, but it was foolish and false. His countenance, round, pimpled and red, was filled with the utterness of vacuity. Even his tongue was wrong; it mumbled thick, wet words when he tried to talk, words with a nonsensical whoop in their intonations. Men hated him on sight. Unreasonably and ferociously they hated him.

"Shake a leg there, you Dumb Nick!" snarled Valuable Perkins.

Having no patronymic Nick had taken to himself the name of Duum, after that proud Dutch patroon family which founded Doom Vale. Duum Vaal had become Doom Vale, and Nicholas Duum was Dumb Nick.

"Hey, Mr. Oren!" said Perkins, as Oren followed the dwarf up red-carpeted stairs. "Heard about that guy who killed a man last night and beat it from Sing Sing?"

"No," said Oren, mounting higher up the stairs, only his legs now visible. "Who was it?"

"I don't know!" Perkins shouted. "But they'll catch him. I bet they'll catch him. Don't you bet they'll catch him, Mr. Oren?"

Oren had gone beyond range of answer.

The sun, no bigger than a toy balloon, sailed up across the Hudson and the hills. It promised heat such as had never been known in Doom Vale. Its cloudless, clear eye was relentless and menacing.

THE postman whistles, and down Black Street he comes. He leaves a letter with Valuable Perkins, with Nibbick Craven and old Cairnstone. Here and there he leaves a letter. Nick, the town idiot, follows him with antic mimicry. From the upper balcony of Perkins Inn Marc Oren watches the postman.

It is noon, or near it. The postman's feet scuffle dust. Fat green worms drop from maple-trees and writhe on the brick walks and are slick beneath the postman's feet.

Wearily the postman walks, for the heat of hottest October lies on Doom Vale. Sweat glues his gray uniform shirt to his lean old ribs. His shoes are streaked with dust. A dragon-fly with huge, golden eyes poises lightly on his left shoulder.

Heavily the postman walks, for though the worn brown leather bag beneath his arm is thin, it is weighted with dreadful things. It bends the postman's shoulders. His feet drag as beneath a load. What burden can a man bear more heavy than the weight of death?

Slowly the postman walks. Surely the dreadful doom which oversets all men, all fates, must walk thuswise, scuffling the dust of stars, crushing fat green worms of gods, with a four-winged dragon demon crouching on its shoulder.

Sunlight strikes the Hudson with glancing spears, the sunlight of the lifting noon. For ten hours now, or twelve, the Killer has been free.

At the foot of steep banks below the town the river rolls, smooth and dark and wide, reflecting all the burning shafts of the sun, pierced by none of them. The Hudson is widest at Doom Vale, stretching wide as a sea. Hills across the river look small as little brown rabbits.

Above Doom Vale tower gloomy hills, thick with woods of red and yellow. In those high rocky forests, between a cleft of summits, pent in by the dam, lie the deep waters of Shadow Pond. And Shadow Stream spouts over the dam spillway, creeping and leaping through the woods and down crags to join the cold Hudson.

Against the iron shoulders of the hills Doom Vale trembles like a sick and unloved woman. Like a wretched, beaten, yellow dog it cowers at the feet of the brazen hills.

But however heavily it may strain and hug itself against the stony, wooded hills, Doom Vale is between the Hudson and the Shadow. Its deepest sleep can not obliviate that certainty. The fear of drowning lies on all Doom Vale.

A fiercer fear has come on you now, Doom Vale. A deadlier danger threatens you now, Doom Vale. Lie low, all fools! Beware! The Fool Killer has come!

THE postman's whistle was like wind in dead, dried leaves—a crackly, rustling whir. The air, dry with Indian-Summer heat, broke into ripples with the shrill notes. Storekeepers on Black Street heard the postman's coming. They scratched their ears, or yawned, or picked their teeth.

In that hot forenoon the skipping, buzzing flies which had survived the early Autumn and the turning of the leaves gathered on the cheeses in Craven's butcher shop and drowsed with languorous stupor. They lifted their prickly feet angrily. They hummed; their wings verberated with drones of vicious weariness.

Slowly fat green worms dropped from the

dusty maples, clinging long, twisting as they dropped. They crawled aimlessly over the walks, half-fried, half-frozen, hungry for the good green leaves above which they had eaten bare.

What those worms were, and why they were, no man knew. Nor did the worms. Yet they had something of the wisdom of man, knowing it is good to live, and eat, and meet opposite-sexed creatures of their kind.

Doom Vale called them the green worms. Each year they came on the maple-trees with the Autumn, and stuffed their squirming lengths with leaves, and passed away. A great novelist had once stopped in Doom Vale with a flat tire and had observed the worms with minute, realistic eye, while his host and his secretary and the chauffeur kept silent.

"They are like life," said the great novelist.

His host and his secretary and the chauffeur were amazed by the penetration of his philosophy. Then the flat tire was changed, and the great novelist, too, passed away.

The feet of old Bub Ladd, the postman, stumbled on bricks and sifted up grassy dust from between the bricks. The dragon-fly on his shoulder stared burningly at the sky, and shuddered through all its barred purple length, and in swift, sunward spirals darted away. It may have been seeking the immensity of the heavens, or a female dragonfly.

From underneath the feet of old Ladd, roused by an ill-natured kick, uprose Nigus Cairnstone's sour black mastiff dog. He stuck out his tail stiffly behind him. His scalloped lips gleamed loose and bare. Hoarsely he barked.

Nigus Cairnstone, bent and cunning and gray, came to the door of his second-hand and upholstering shop. His black dog, Night, was said to bark only when death was near. Old Nigus Cairnstone counted cunningly the ominous roars.

Thirteen times Night barked, as he had barked the night before when the bells were ringing for the Killer. Cairnstone counted. Dan Lyons, the hardware man, said it was only twelve times. But every other man on Black Street verified Nigus Cairnstone's word that the barks of Night had been thirteen, like that, no more, no less.

The black mastiff, its dismal tolling done, subsided in muttering monotones, sullen as thunder. His tail sagged. His head sank down between wide-planted forelegs. In sudden fury the dog turned, baring his gums, snapping at fleas. With snout upturned he chewed his own withers.

Down Black Street the postman went, handing forth letters. He left a letter with Nibbick Craven, the marshal and butcher man; with Daniel Lyons, the hardware man; with Val Perkins, the hotel man; with Noel Cleaves, the grocery man; with Doc Snellerjohn, the drug-store man; with Harold Ferald, the rich man; with George W. Wayne, the town prosecutor; with Nathan Cass, Judge Purly, Rance Perdee, Nils Chubb, and old Nigus Cairnstone. Twelve letters he gave forth.

"Is 't hot enough for you today?" old Bub Ladd asked each man of those twelve men.

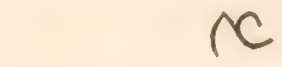
"Looks like it'll be setting in for a cold spell tonight," answered each man of those twelve men.

Each man of those twelve men—Craven and Lyons, Perkins, Snellerjohn, Cleaves, Ferald, Wayne, Cass, Purly, Perdee, Chubb and old Nigus Cairnstone—opened at once the letter he had taken from Ladd's skinny hand—opened it impatiently, or timidly, or cautiously, or curiously, or ruthlessly with tearing, after his secret and inmost nature. And each man found inside a message of the identical same words:

I've had enough of you, Old Fool. You'd better watch out for me from now on. I'd liefer kill you than spit. I am the Fool Killer.

Each man of those twelve men, still impatient, or timid, or cautious, or curious, or ruthless, read the same message, typewritten with assorted misspellings on plain white paper bearing the watermark of a dragon and a crown.

Each man looked to see who had signed that threatening and witless message, to see who considered himself appointed, by drunkenness, fury, madness, or an authentic fate, the official Fool Killer in Doom Vale. Each man found for signature an unmeaning scrawl like this—



And each turned the letter over, but found nothing more. Each might turn it over till his thumbs wore ink from it, staring

at it till his eyes burned holes through it, wondering about it till his brain was cracked over it. But he would find nothing more.

Some men laughed. Nathan Cass, supremely confident in his gambler's luck, laughed. And so did Nibbick Craven. With snorting guffaws they answered the fatal warning of the Fool Killer.

But old Cairnstone did not laugh. He never laughed, that old gray man. He saw Nancy Cass, watchful and afraid, hurrying from the door of Cleaves' grocery, her arms piled high with packages. Looking at no one, speaking to no one, she hurried along. Old Cairnstone scowled; he had always hated her.

She was too full of life. He, who had seen so many young and strong go down the dusty way, would never live to see her perish. After his world was ended she would still go on, and light would still be in her dark-brown eyes.

As she went past him in her blue dress old Nigus Cairnstone had a vision. He thought Nancy Cass was a slender wave of that blue water, of that avalanchal flood, which it is said will some day drown all Doom Vale.

He looked up and across the street. On the veranda of Perkins Inn the stranger, Marc Oren, was sitting. He, too, was looking hard at Nancy Cass.

MARC OREN could see all of Black Street and most of Doom Vale from his chair on the up-stairs veranda of Perkins Inn. Across the street were one and two and three storied shops. Their façades were of gray clapboards or of gray brick. Awnings extended over the sidewalk from some of the shops; and the awnings combined with the worm-eaten maples to give a sun-flecked, speckled shade.

Through empty gaps in the row of shops he saw the Hudson gleaming lustily, winding north and winding south, with its sinuous silver course lost in violet haze to the north and rose haze to the south. Little boats moved on it with the smooth tranquillity of little white iron boats or ducks in a shooting gallery. In the haze to the north, hills clamped together, seeming to strangle the Hudson's course.

Oren looked down Black Street. Not far away the town thinned and straggled off, and buildings ceased. Beyond were the thick, Autumn-tinted woods. The street became a road, and then little more than a lane, turning sharply toward the hills and climbing crookedly up, like a frightened snake scurrying for cover.

It had been down that way, around Shadow Dam, by Timber Swamp Road, by Lost Man's Lane and the Shaft Mine Trail, that Marc Oren had come to Doom Vale in the night and in the dawn.

George W. Wayne, the lawyer, was sitting on the veranda with Oren. With nervous hands he folded and refolded the letter Bub Ladd had given him from the Fool Killer. He frowned so deeply the scowl seemed about to split his narrow, pointed face.

Oren turned to him.

"You say that's east?" he asked, pointing to the river.

"East as anything," answered Wayne.

"It seems it ought to be west," said Oren, lowering his eyelids.

He seemed puzzled.

"I must be turned around. And that's the road to Shadow Pond?"

"No," said Wayne, pointing north. "*That's* the road."

"Didn't this way use to be the road?"

Wayne shook himself angrily.

"*That's* the road," he retorted positively. "It's always been the road, and it always will be the road."

"I must be turned around," said Oren with his candid air of puzzlement.

He watched old Bub Ladd walking down the street. Down Black Street the idiot Nick had been following the postman with grinning mimicry. Hearing the sullen, heavy laughter of Craven, old Bub Ladd became aware of his follower. He turned ferociously.

"Do you know you're mocking the United States Postal Service?" he squeaked with awful outrage. "Get out of my way, you idiot!"

"Idiot yourself," muttered Nick, preparing to dodge.

Ladd directed an ill-balanced kick at the dwarf, and stumbled, and tottered and fell. Loafers who watched laughed boomingly. Oren saw George W. Wayne grinning to himself. With the celerity of a monkey, with the malicious fury of a weasel, Bub Ladd picked himself up. Screaming with insane rage, he caught Nick by his collar band and kicked him heavily and repeatedly.

"That'll teach you a lesson, I reckon," Ladd panted, senilely proud of his brittle

old strength. "I reckon that'll teach you a lesson!"

Oren half-rose from his chair at the brutality of the punishment. A dangerous look was on his face. But all other men who saw it, including Wayne, laughed wearily, as at an old jest which repetition has made stale, but which yet demands laughter because there is no other jest.

Wayne turned his eyes on Nancy Cass.

"There she goes! Reckon she knows now that fellow Cram has broke from Sing Sing, if she didn't know it before. I'd not be surprized to find she knows where he's hiding," he muttered. "She needs to be watched. You watch out if she don't."

Oren turned his angry eyes on the lawyer.

"Who is that girl?" he asked in low voice.

"She? Oh, she's nothing," said Wayne, looking at her with the heat of desire, scowling deeply underneath his low-pulled hat.

Nibbick Craven, insolent with his legal power, knowing no man in Doom Vale would strike a blow in defense of Nathan Cass' daughter, shouted loudly:

"Where you going in all the hurry, Nance? Hear you been keeping company with a Polack from the Mills."

She did not turn; she pretended not to hear.

"Better look out!" Craven warned angrily. "Young Nebulus Cairnstone may be coming back from the city some of these fine days, and he'll hand that Polack fellow what he handed Cram."

Flushed with the heat of his own voice, Craven looked around for admiration and applause of his wit. Broadly he winked.

"Who's that man?" asked Oren softly.

Wayne told him—

"Oh, him; he's Craven, the marshal."

"He ought to have his jaw broken," said Oren.

"I'd like to see any one do it," Wayne said belligerently.

"Would you?" asked Oren.

Nancy Cass' hair was dark red, the color of Autumn leaves darkened by misty Autumnal rains. In the sunlight it had a tinge of furious gold. But she was little abroad in the sunlight, for reasons you will understand.

Such elfin, elusive gold men fight for, such gold they starve for in desert, or freeze for on mountain, or go down the bitter sea. And die for it, never attaining it. But die gladly, knowing the world's end and the prairies of Paradise are grassed with such soft gold.

Men had fought for Nancy Cass, even for her, the gambler's daughter. Cram and Nebulus Cairnstone had fought for her, struggling nearly to the death. Other men, such as Harold Ferald or Noel Cleaves or George W. Wayne, too wary and soft for fighting, would be glad enough to have her by any way they might.

She never knew how much all men wanted her. Yet some subtle intuition of their thwarted, malignant desire made her brown eyes brave and insolent. She would not bow before the jealous scorn, the lascivious hate of all Doom Vale.

"You ask who that girl is, brother," said George W. Wayne to Oren. "Well, she's no good. She's the daughter of old Nat Cass, the gambler. About a year ago she stirred up a lot of trouble between Nebulus Cairnstone and a fellow named Cram. But we showed Cram, all right. And we showed her. She won't be starting any more trouble again."

"Her name is—?" asked Oren, looking hard at Wayne, seeking some lost memory.

"Name's Cass. She lives alone in a flat up top of Lyons's hardware store ever since her father kicked her out. Makes a kind of living painting dishes and making embroidery for the New York stores. Has a hard time of it, I guess. You seem anxious to meet her, brother."

"What if I am?" asked Oren.

"Well, nothing," Wayne said hastily, disconcerted by Oren's intense tone.

As Nancy Cass hurried down the street from the grocery a few barefooted little ragamuffins came up behind her. They hopped on one foot, for the brick walk was a griddle. Patient worms squirmed beneath those leathery soles, and patiently crawled off with half their bodies mangled.

Whispering and grimacing, poking out their elbows, winking, laughing with cowardly, evil laughter, the little gutter muckers trailed behind the slender girl in blue. They knew all about Nance Cass. Even the youngest, the dirty-nosed brats in pinafores, guessed at a wicked mystery, an iniquity connected with the mystery of original sin, with what ladies of the Busy Bee Sewing-Circle whispered when all little boys were barred from the parlors, with words and signs chalked up on the high

wooden fences about the Ferald Mills, with the mystery of what went on at the Red House, whose shutters were always closed, but from which at night was heard the sound of a tinkling piano and sudden laughter.

Little Willie McGudgeon, son of the mistress of Nat Cass' Red House, had been told by his mother when proudly drunk:

"Ye are a misshappen little baste, and ugly as a toad. But ye are too good to as-sociate with the likes of Nance Cass. For yer mother was a lady, which nobody can deny."

That pleased little Willie McGudgeon—who was like all shanty-born people, a vain and treacherous snob—and when in later years he should be hanged for cowardly crimes, remembrance that his mother had been a lady would strengthen him a little to face the almighty dark.

Willie McGudgeon, boldest and wisest of urchins, ran up close behind Nancy and wheeled sharply. As he raced away he yelled a nameless obscenity. In shrill voices his gang repeated the epithet like an orchestration of young frogs. And like a swarm of young frogs they hopped frantically after their leader, knees doubled up, cheeks puffing, terrified stomachs sticking out in front of them.

Loafers on Black Street laughed. They jammed hands in pockets and winked over their shoulders.

"They're calling Nance names," Dan Lyons said maliciously to Nathan Cass.

"Let 'em go as far as they like," said Cass easily. "She ain't *mine*."

Oren whispered to Wayne, and Wayne, frightened by his voice, drew his chair away.

"Let me get this straight," said Oren. "You allow those little rats to call women any vile thing without taking the hide off them?"

"Where have you been, brother?" asked George W. Wayne. "Don't you know what women are? There's her old man, old Cass. Let him catch them if he wants."

Oren looked across the street at Nathan Cass, who lounged easily in front of Lyons' hardware store. Cass was smiling his oily smile at Lyons. He shook his damp black curls. But if he had done as he wanted to do, he would have tightened those soft arms of his which had once been so mighty in the boxing-ring, and he would have struck forth with his soft fists, struck and struck again, till the loafers on Black Street were nothing more than mud. For though he and his daughter never spoke, yet she had the look of her mother, whom Nathan Cass had loved with all his wild, rotten heart.

Old Bub Ladd had turned back down the street, his mail-bag empty, wiping his hands as if his work was done. Some craziness of heat, some vitriol dregs of wit left from days long ago when he had been the smartest young fellow in all Doom Vale, some cracked and blistered humor stirred old Bub Ladd that day. As he came up to Nancy he shouted—

"Wait a minute!"

The girl stopped, her back arched with the weight of her bundles. Suspiciously she regarded the postman.

"I got a letter," mumbled Ladd, pretending to search through his empty bag. "Here 'tis. No. Maybe this is it. No—"

"A letter for me?" asked Nancy, blood coloring her face.

"Seems to me 'twas postmarked Sing Sing," muttered Ladd, peering into the caverns of his bag. "Must have been that fellow Cram telling you he was off for Europe. 'S 'is it? No; 's is a bill of old Cairnstone's to Judge Purly for professional services, burying the judge's wife and upholstering the parlor furniture. Hic! hic! hic!"

Old Bub hiccuped with laughter.

"What do you want with me?" asked Nancy Cass, lifting up her burning eyes.

"Here— Why, here *is* a letter, all right. Must 've overlooked it."

Cautiously the postman shook the letter.

"No, 'tain't from Cram. And 'tain't for you. It's a letter for me."

He tore it open with his teeth.

"Where is the letter for me?" whispered Nancy.

"I was just a-joking, Nance," said old Bub Ladd. "There wasn't no letter for you. Who'd ever be writing to a girl like you?"

The letter rustled and crackled in his thin old fist.

"I was just a-fooling, Nance," sneered Ladd.

Oh, utterest of fools, that old Bub Ladd! The Fool Killer, terrible with thoughts of murder, was not far away from him even then.

"Looking for some one, Nance?" yelled

the druggist Snellerjohn, poking his triangular nose out his door. "Cram ought to be hoofing it up this way pretty soon. Maybe he'll come riding in a private car on the five-fifteen."

To Nathan Cass old Dan Lyons growled:

"Nance ain't forgot that Cram fellow yet, let me tell you. And if she saw a chance to help him, she'd do it. If she was *my* daughter I'd learn her some sense if I had to bust every dad-busted bone in her body!"

Nathan Cass chewed the nub of a cigar round and round till his heavy cheeks were distorted.

"She's nothing to me," he said. "She ain't mine."

And he added after a long silence—

"Nor yours."

With watery eyes Bub Ladd read the letter he had pulled from his bag. It was the same, word for word, as the twelve others he had given out on Black Street:

"I've had enough of you, Old Fool. You'd better watch out for me from now on. I'd liefer kill you than spit. I am the Fool Killer."

As he read, and traced with his finger the undecipherable signature, Bub Ladd stumbled again over the black mastiff Night. The mastiff creaked to his feet. He sneezed. He growled. He roared. Once more he barked, hoarsely, turning his withered nose up to the hot forenoon sky, in whose blue lingered no curled ghost of the malignant moon.

Again old Nigus Cairnstone was listening. Thirteen times the black dog barked.

Marc Oren left the veranda. When he had got to the street Nancy Cass was no more to be seen. She had hurried up to her rooms above Lyons' hardware store. Oren looked at the windows, but he could not see her.

IN THE noon a car from Sing Sing Prison came rushing into Doom Vale. Warden Drew was in it, with three of his hard-faced guards. Blunt rifles pointed up at the sky. The eyes of the guards were dull and sleepless and stared unwinkingly before them like eyes of stone. They spoke among themselves in a curt language of gestures and grunts.

Oren looked out of a window of Perkins Inn. Drew was talking to Nibbick Craven.

"Seen anything at all?" Drew shouted loudly and clearly.

"Haven't seen nothing," said Nibbick Craven.

The marshal had on his dirty, blood-smeared butcher's apron. He pulled his badge from a pocket and pinned it on. His jaws were closed, his air bellicose. He wanted to show these men he was as good as any one, though knowing that they held his power and cunning in some contempt.

"Keep your eyes open," said Warden Drew grimly. "We haven't got a trace of him yet," Oren heard him add.

"You don't need to worry about *me*," said Nibbick Craven.

"I'm not worrying about you!" the warden roared. "I'm worrying about letting this Killer run free."

"How'd you come to let him loose?" asked Craven, looking around for a soft place on which to spit. "That ain't the right way to let him do."

Warden Drew grew dark red. His teeth were bared.

"Maybe you know a better way," he choked. "Maybe you could handle this fellow."

"You don't need to worry about me," said Craven again.

"I'm not worrying about you!" the warden shouted.

"Well?"

"Well! Keep your eyes opened and your mouth shut. I tell you we've got to get this 5521. He'll stop at nothing. He's a killer!"

A crowd began to assemble about the prison car. Marc Oren pulled back the starched lace curtains from his window, and watched curiously.

Nibbick Craven roared loudly:

"I ain't no fool, mister! You won't see any jailbird killing me!"

"Nobody saw him kill Major Drew," suggested Officer 17, one of the guards in the warden's car.

"Hey!" shouted Craven as the prison car began to glide away. "Who's this fellow? What's his name? What'd he look like?"

The car halted once more.

"He was sent up by the name of John Doe," said Drew. "We never could find out his name."

"Was his name by any chance Nero Cram?"

Warden Drew frowned.

"That name's familiar," he said doubtfully.

He turned questioningly to Officers 17 and 338.

"You're right," said 338, twisting up his face. "I've heard that name myself—somewhere."

"Hey!" shouted Craven, running up and grasping Drew's sleeve. "We know him! He was sent up from Doom Vale—assault with intent to kill on Nebulus Cairnstone. Oh, he was a murderer, all right! Wasn't he a sort of fellow with a black beard——"

"Cram didn't have a beard," Val Perkins broke in. "He had a black mustache."

"He had a kind of little beard," said old Dan Lyons.

"No, sir," denied Rance Perdee.

"Well, he had a goatee," said Doc Snellerjohn. "And he was a kind of medium-height, heavy-built fellow——"

"Cram!" hooted Craven. "He was short and thin——"

"Built swinging low off the ground," suggested Val Perkins. "His eyes were brown——"

"No, sir. They were blue," said Rance Perdee.

"Green, I'd call 'em if I ever seen anything green," said Dan Lyons.

Drew shouted about the babel, which was noisy as the chattering of sparrows—"What about it?"

"Cram had a way of talking deep and low—" began Val Perkins.

"Sounded pretty loud to me," piped old Judge Purly, who pushed his way up.

"Hey, mister," said Craven, "was this fellow a kind of fellow with a kind of little beard and eyes, low, heavy set, or lighter, with a kind of way of talking low and deep and loud——"

"And sunburned," suggested Doc Snellerjohn.

"And sunburned," added Nibbick Craven.

Warden Drew muttered in words intelligible that all Doom Vale men were fools.

"What would you say 5521 looked like?" he asked Officer 17. "You saw him most."

Officer 17 squinted.

"Kind of gay and foolish," he said, his face creaking with thought. "You'd never take him for a killer. Though that kind generally are."

"Had a pimple or something on his nose or his chin," said Officer 338.

"Wasn't it a stye on his eye?" asked Officer 17.

"No, it wasn't that," said Officer 97, who had not spoken heretofore. "It was a mole on his hand. I remember, because I got a memory for faces."

Warden Drew looked at Craven.

"Was this man Cram like that?" he asked.

"Kind of like that," Craven answered hazily.

"I'd say that was Cram, all right," Doc Snellerjohn stated positively.

"His photo and description have been mailed out all over the State," said Drew grimly. "We're going through the hills for him now. We'll know him, all right, when we see him!"

"And he'll know us!" said Officer 17, laughing hoarsely.

"You bet he will!" said Officer 338.

"I'd like to lay eyes on him just once!" muttered Officer 97.

Valuable Perkins gave a twist and twirl to his sharp-spiked mustaches, which he had been told made him look like an English duke.

"I'll know that fellow Cram myself all right if he ever shows his face around here!" Said George W. Wayne, scowling deeply—"I'd know that son-of-a-gun in the darkest night."

"Maybe you'll have to know him in a dark night," said Warden Drew quietly.

"What do you mean by that?"

"He won't be traveling around much by day."

"That's right," said Craven. "We'll be looking for him."

"Where do you think he's headed?" squeaked Judge Purly, his frail voice, emerging from a breast so round and fat, sounding as if he kept a cricket concealed beneath his collar.

"South," said Warden Drew, nodding thoughtfully. "We're going through the hills, but there's no chance of finding him. He's gone to New York. They all go there."

"One thing sure," growled Craven. "Cram won't come back *here*."

The guards were impatient to be off.

"Why doesn't the warden let these yaps alone, Red?" muttered Officer 338. "They wouldn't know their own faces if they saw them lying down beside them."

"I'd know that fellow in a million years!" Craven shouted none too intelligibly, having

overheard. "Don't think you're so smart, mister."

"Better not be too sure of remembering him, brother," said Officer 17. "A little hitch in the Big House changes guys' looks a lot. They ain't so gay."

"Nothing could change that fellow Cram so much *I'd* forget him," said Nibbick Craven.

Valuable Perkins looked up, and saw Marc Oren standing at the window of his room. The starched white curtains dropped as Perkins started to shout, and the window was empty.

Perkins shouted at the blank window:

"Hey—hear? They're looking for the Killer who busted out of Sing Sing last night!"

"Who were you yelling at?" asked Drew, turning his head up.

"Friend o' mine," said Perkins. "Didn't you see him standing there?"

"No," said Drew. "I didn't see anything."

The prison car tore away, pursuing swiftly its hounding, unrelenting search for the fugitive slayer. Haverstraw and West Point would see it. It would comb the river front and the stony fastnesses of the hills.

Marc Oren came down and mingled with the slow-dispersing crowd.

THE coming of those heavy-faced prison guards made impression on Doom Vale, and many men were frightened, though they'd not admit it. In the woods vast terrors lurked. Might not the Killer lurk there, too?

"I tell you, Nathan Cass," Bub Ladd stated furiously to the gambler, "that girl of yours knows something about Cram. If I was you I'd wring it out of her."

"Well, you ain't me," said Nathan Cass, darkling.

"If Cram tries to come back here," said Judge Purly to George W. Wayne, "it will be that Cass girl who brings him back. She's dangerous!"

"She's all of that," said Wayne, wetting his lips to think of Nancy Cass slender loveliness. "Shuh!"

"Why shuh?"

"That's Mr. Oren. He comes from the South, from Hellburne, Florida. He was interested in Nance this morning. I noticed it."

"What has that got to do with me shuhing?" squeaked Judge Purly.

"You know how Southerners are about women. They don't like to hear 'em talked about. Take my word for it," whispered Wayne, "that girl will know where Cram is headed for."

Said Dan Lyons to Nibbick Craven:

"Last night when the bells were ringing I heard Nance Cass moving about. Yes, sir, she was up to something."

"We'll teach her something!" swore Craven. "Ain't she learned her lesson yet? She'll get worse next time."

"Hear Nance Cass has been helping that fellow Cram," said Rance Perdee to Nils Chubb.

Said Chubb:

"I'd like to see ol' Nebulus Cairnstone back in town. He'd show her something, he would!"

So they whispered. Later that afternoon Harold Ferald, the rich man, spoke to Snellerjohn, the druggist.

"I hear Nance Cass helped Cram to break away last night."

"Yes, and I hear she knows where he is now," said Snellerjohn.

"What's she up to?" asked Ferald grimly. "She's got Spanish blood in her, I've heard Nat Cass say. Doc, I don't think she'd be beyond letting us be murdered in our beds!"

Doc Snellerjohn wiped his triangular nose with his fingers.

"She's a good-looking girl," he said.

"You said it, Doc."

"You bet I said it."

"Said a mouthful," stated Ferald, talking through his nose.

"Said an armful," amended Snellerjohn, who posed as a wit. "I'd like to have my arms around her! Say, I'd like to— Be careful, Mr. Ferald!"

"What's there to be careful about, Doc?"

"That's Mr. Oren—you see that man there without a lick of hair on his head? Well, that's Mr. Oren. He comes from the South. I've heard George W. Wayne say he's a shooting man."

"Oh," said Ferald uneasily.

"Yeh. I think maybe he's a prohibition agent or something. I'd be careful."

"Likes Nance Cass, does he?" grunted Ferald.

"Who wouldn't?" asked Snellerjohn, softly rubbing his nose.

"Why, —— him——"

"I'd be careful, Mr. Ferald," Snellerjohn

cautioned again. "He's got a look about him I wouldn't like to meet on a dark night."

Ferald collapsed.

"I'm not afraid of saying anything about Nance Cass," he whispered, so low Snellerjohn could hardly hear.

From all these whispered rumors, these mutterings, these vague pretenses of knowing something, from all this secret growing terror of the murderer who had not been caught, there came action.

Before the afternoon was gone three men, Nibbick Craven, Harold Ferald, and Judge Purly, a self-licensed committee of inquiry, stamped up the bare stairs beside Lyons' hardware store and pounded on the door of Nancy Cass's rooms.

They walked in immediately. The girl was sitting by the window, full in the ultimate light of the sun which rested on the mountains, swiftly sewing white rosebuds on a silk gown with stitches incredibly fine. Some lucky bride would wear that gown, paying a great price for it in a rich New York store.

The room was poor and nakedly furnished. That surprized the three men, for whispers of palatial surroundings and sweet orgies had been passed about Nance Cass. Each man in Doom Vale, bitterly though he might speak of the girl, longed to be king of those orgies. From such frustrate longing sprang much of Doom Vale's hate for the daughter of Nathan Cass.

The girl looked up in swift terror. She saw those three men slowly marching toward her—Nibbick Craven, chunky and sturdy and small of eye; Judge Purly, a huge round mountain which wheezed and squeaked with every stirring; and Harold Ferald, tall, bent-shouldered, hook-nosed, brown-faced, with a high cowlick above his narrow forehead.

There was no laughter in their stern faces. Yet Nancy would have been more afraid of drunken, genial laughter than of their sternness, for she knew too well what Doom Vale wished of her.

"You know that fellow Cram busted loose last night," said Craven at once.

"Yes," whispered the girl, standing up, startled and afraid, looking from one man to another.

"So you knew it?" Craven asked grimly.

She shook her head.

"I didn't know," she said with effort. "I've never heard about him."

"Why did you say you knew?" thundered Ferald.

She swallowed.

"I meant I understood what you said. I haven't heard anything about Mr. Cram."

Craven walked up and seized her wrist. He twisted it.

"Don't lie to me, Nance!" he roared. "I know you. You know he killed the warden's brother and broke clean away."

Nancy looked at him. She gave a gasp of pain.

"He didn't," she said with effort. "I know he didn't."

But her eyes showed she believed he did.

"Don't lie to me!" roared Craven more loudly.

"Don't lie, girl," squeaked Judge Purly.

"You knew he was going to kill and break away!" shouted Craven. "And you've made plans to meet him. Yes, you have, —— you! I say you have! I tell you, what we've done to you before isn't a thing to what we're going to do now! You'd better speak up, sister! You'd better tell us where Cram is hiding!"

Nancy's face was twisted up with pain. Tears oozed from her tight-clenched eyes. She fought with tightened muscles, not struggling, to wrench free from Craven's clasp. But he had hard hold of her wrist, and he twisted it. He was sadistic, like most men physically strong, and it made him lustful to see this beautiful woman in pain.

"Tell us where he's hiding," exhorted Ferald, "so we can tell the guards."

"I'll tend to this, Mr. Ferald," Craven said harshly. "Now you loosen up your jaw, Nance! You tell us where Cram has gone!"

"I don't know—anything!" Nance said between her teeth.

"You'd better tell!"

"I don't know. And if I did——"

"Speak up! I'll break your wrist off!"

"I'd never tell you!" she panted.

"I'll snap your wrist clean off!"

"I don't know!" she said.

"You'll get it! I'll break your elbow!" snarled Craven, grinding his jaws, thrusting his hard, sweating face close up to the bloom of her cheeks.

"If I knew I'd never tell!" she screamed.

Craven was afraid that he would fulfil his word and snap her arm at wrist or elbow. He loosed his hold, and the girl sank to her

knees, sobbing in dry gasps, without sound.

"How about taking her finger-prints, Mr. Ferald?" Craven asked, panting with the exhaustion of his effort.

Harold Ferald had a hobby of finger-prints. He had catalogued the impressions of every one of the hundreds of men and girls who worked in the Ferald Mills, as well as of many prominent citizens of Doom Vale, and many of his employees regarded him as kind of omniscient demon. Once by a finger-print he had proved a girl guilty of stealing a bolt of cloth and sent her to jail for ten months. Such things aroused him to the intensest delight.

"I've got her prints already," Ferald said. "Took 'em the Summer she worked in my mills before Cram came to town."

Judge Purly was uneasy. He pulled at Craven's elbow and whispered shrilly in the marshal's ear.

"Easy, boy! You haven't proved her guilty of anything. You haven't even got a warrant. She could send us out of here and sue for damages."

"Would you listen to such a suit?" growled Craven.

"I'm not the only court in the State," the judge mumbled.

"Well, you take care of your business, and I'll take care of mine. Get up, Nance! Wipe off your eyes. Good thing you know it's no use to bellow. I know how to handle women."

"Easy, easy," whispered Judge Purly.

"By Jerusalem! I want to know where that fellow Cram is!" roared Craven. "I'm not going to have him coming to murder me in the night."

The face of Ferald went bloodless.

"No fear of that," he said with a nasal whine. "He'll not come back here!"

"I'd like to see him," said Craven none too hardily. "But I'm not taking any chances."

"Nebulus Cairnstone's the man he'll want to get," said Ferald, "and he's in New York. It wouldn't be us, Craven. It wouldn't be you or me."

Nibbick Craven heeded the cautionary whispers of the judge. He released his hands from the girl. She fell back against a chair, looking at him with dark, intense eyes, shaking with spasms but saying no word.

"You'll always be a trouble-maker," Craven growled. "I've seen enough of you around here. You get out. You clear out of town. Go and meet Cram, if you're going to! You'll go to the pen when he goes to the chair."

"I'd sooner be there than here," she said.

"You clear out of town! You go!"

She lifted her head defiantly. The three men caught a flash of that fire which was a heritage from her Spanish mother. And Nathan Cass, too, had been in his youth a fighting man. Judge Purly stepped back a pace.

"I'd be glad to go," Nancy said steadily. "You've kept me here. You'd never let me go."

"Well, you go now," said Craven.

"I'll do it!" she said. "Let me pack my things. I'll go tonight."

"You go now!" roared Craven. "You beat it down those stairs! You leg it away from here as fast as ever you can! If I catch you within five miles of here at the end of an hour, I'll get you! And what we'll do to you, Nance Cass, will be five times as much as we did to you before."

Horror grew on Nancy's face. She put her hands before her eyes. The three man saw her shuddering, felt her terror and were no longer afraid. Yet they had been afraid for a moment of her, the gambler's daughter. Nathan Cass advanced on her.

"O God!" Nancy whispered. "For a man!"

"You've had men enough, everybody knows," Craven sneered. "What do you want now; another Polack? You get! I'll give you three!"

"What if I stay, you beast?" Nancy whispered.

"I'll give you three!" Craven shouted, pointing to the door.

His cheeks were purple with fury.

"One—two——"

Nancy Cass looked at each man. Though she was proud, with pride more intense than they could ever dream of; though she was high-spirited and brave and wise in ways of which their base minds could have no comprehension, yet their brute force was more than she could ever fight. Her very bravery and wisdom told her how vain would be any contest. Her pride made her shrink with horror from the foulness of their vengeance.

She believed, having never been beyond Doom Vale, that no matter how decently and honorably she lived there was no law,

no protection for her, the gambler's daughter. In all her life she had met but one upright man; and Nero Cram had not come from Doom Vale.

To get away by any way from these cruel men would be good enough. Perhaps somewhere in the wide world hiding she might find again that stern, brave, dangerous man, Nero Cram, who had been kind to her. Before Craven had shouted out his inexorable, "Three!" she had gone out of the door, taking nothing with her, dressed as she was in her thin blue Summer gown.

Nibbick Craven laughed heavily. But because they understood there was no mirth in his hilarity, Ferald and Purly did not even smile.

"Now," said Craven, "if that fellow Cram takes a notion to sneak back to Doom Vale some fine night, it won't be Nance Cass who brings him."

"Why don't you follow her, Craven?" Ferald suggested. "You might find out where she meets Cram."

"Why don't you do it?" asked Craven.

Ferald mumbled:

"I'm not a marshal of the law. That fellow's dangerous!"

"I know that," said Nibbick Craven.

A heavy, uncertain tread sounded on the stairs. Silently, expectantly they listened. What they expected they didn't know, but they were uneasy. The sunlight was fading beyond the mountains.

"What is it?" Craven boomed hoarsely, as the tread hesitated beyond the door.

Marc Oren came in. By now they all knew who he was—a stranger from Hellburne, Florida. The room was growing darker. Oren stood looking at them with his eyes half-closed, narrowed in thoughtful pondering. His white, shaved head made him look much older than he probably was, and in the crepuscular light it had a look fantastic and ferocious.

"I'm looking," Oren said uncertainly, "for a young lady named—" he glanced at a card in his hand— "Nancy Cass. Have you seen her?"

"No," said Craven, not knowing why he said it. "No, we haven't seen her."

"Where could I find her?" asked Oren, lifting his eyes direct on Craven.

"I don't know where you could find her," Craven muttered, looking away.

"She's not around?"

Craven could not face those dark eyes staring at him so intently from the shadows. He coughed and shifted his feet and stared out of the windows at the west.

"Anything we can do, sir?" squeaked Judge Purly.

His eyes burned with nervous fear. He wiped his forehead and rubbed his hands together.

"Miss Cass a friend of yours perhaps?"

Oren stammered, uneasy also. "A personal question. I wanted to ask her a question. You gentlemen are friends of hers?"

"Oh, yes," said Judge Purly. "Yes, yes, yes. We all know Nance."

Again he was conscious of the direct stare of Oren's eyes. He rolled his own eyes, and his nose itched with a horrid sweat.

"Perhaps I can answer your question," suggested Harold Ferald.

"Are you Miss Cass?"

"No," said Ferald with some violence. "I'm Mr. Ferald."

"Ferald? Ferald?" mused Oren, lingering over the name as if to recall an elusive memory.

He looked hard at Ferald.

"Yes, sir. I'm Mr. Ferald. Can I help you?"

Oren pondered.

"No, Ferald, I don't believe you can," he said.

With the same puzzled frown on his face he went out of the door. Down the bare stairs his heavy tread diminished and died away.

The three men looked silently at each other, conscious of the same perturbation. A little shaky, saying no word, they tiptoed down after him.

HAROLD FERALD, an intense hunger on his set lips, followed the way which men on Black Street told him Nancy Cass had gone. He had never had intention of letting her get away.

"Yeh, she was running," said old Nigus Cairnstone, "running down Black Street."

"She was going for the woods," said Noel Cleaves, "and I seen she was a-crying."

"No, I don't know where she's going or gone," Nathan Cass growled. "Haven't I said enough she's nothing to me? No, nothing."

With long, shambling gait Ferald hurried and caught sight of Nancy at the edge of town. She was hurrying along blindly,

bareheaded, without coat, though the chill of October evening was beginning to fall.

Ferald increased his stride, and was close behind her at the turn where the road grew narrow and the fringes of the hilly woods began. Desperately she ran a few paces when she caught sight of him. The nearness of the thick woodlands made Ferald cautious, but the sight of the girl made him fierce. He caught up with her soon. She gasped for breath as she turned and faced him, walking slowly back, shielding herself with her arms.

"What do you want?" she said. "I'm going."

Deliberately Ferald reached out a long arm and grasped her shoulder. His heavy fingers pinched.

"Going to leave me, Nance, without one good-by?" he asked.

Ferald had once been away to college and was a gentleman. And he was the richest man in Doom Vale, largest shareholder in the famous mills which make Allover Overalls and Rollicking Rompers. He had desired few things in this life which he had not attained.

"I'll take you away from this dead hole," he said. "I'll take you to New York—I'll take you to Bermuda and Niagara Falls. You stick with me, girl. I'll show you a time."

"I'm going," said Nancy, striving to pull free, "alone."

Ferald twisted her arm, and laughed. The girl's face writhed with pain. She knew that if she swung one blow at Ferald, so sure as he was a living man he would smash her to the ground. He had always been a hard man with women, as his girls at the Mills could testify.

"You—let me—go! If you were a man——"

"I'm a man, all right," droned Ferald, bending down his face. "And you're a woman, Nance. That's why I want you."

He closed the crook of his arm about her neck, not too close for her to breathe, but threatening with strength unused. The silence of the woods was all about them, with only the shrill singing of katydids to warn they were not alone. Doom Vale lay around a turn of the road; and the loudest scream could hardly penetrate there.

Close, close Ferald pressed the girl. The sun was going down. Long shadows stretched from the trees. The closeness of her made Ferald fierce and hot. But the coolness of the evening sent quavers down his spine.

He looked around. Nothing was behind him. Closer he pressed the girl.

"Let me—go!"

"Go with me?" said Ferald softly.

"Let me go!"

"Say, 'Please,' " ordered Ferald. "Say, 'Please,' you little red-head beauty." She turned away her face.

"Please!" she panted, struggling to withdraw from his sharp, close-pressed features.

"Why, shut your jaw!" mocked Ferald. "I'll let you go when I get good and ready. There's fire in you. By thunder, I'll bet you could fight! Here, girl, I've got you now. You've been Neb Cairnstone's girl, and you've been Cram's woman. But, by thunder, you won't be going around with any Polacks from my mills! Dirty, greasy Polacks——"

Nancy's words were muffled against his rough coat sleeve.

"You lie—lie—lie! Every one of you, you know you lie!"

"Spanish fire!" said Ferald hoarsely. "I could love you, girl."

He loosed his arm about her neck and seized her wrists, twisting them as he had seen Craven do. The edges of his lips were white with grim and cruel lust, so tight he pressed them. His ears roared with the shrilling of crickets and the hammering of his heart.

"We all know what you are," he said. "Why play those airs for me? Daughter of a Spanish tramp and old Nat Cass, the bum! Believe me, I'm being good to you. If you were where you belong, you'd be in your father's Red House on Front Street."

Nancy snatched free one hand, and swung it back. With all the force of her lithe shoulders she slapped Ferald across the face, choking a scream. The tall man tottered, his eyes for the moment blinded.

Shaking and snarling hoarsely, Ferald caught her by the throat and by the hair. A smile grew on his lean, twisted lips. He found it an exquisite pleasure, ravishing his every sense, to crush the softness and mar the beauty of the girl.

"If Cram and the Polacks can have you, so can I!"

His hands tore at her throat. His face, stretching forward like a horse's, was avid and strained. Nancy screamed at the silences of the wood.

Ferald, the tall, strong man, tottered, for a great weight had struck him on the back. He reeled, his hands outflung, bellowing hoarsely.

"It's got me! It's got me! Craven! Help!"

As the blow struck he thought it was a great stone, hurled by demon force from the shadowy woods. His back snapped back. He thought that his spine was broken, that in torrents of gushing blood his life was leaving him.

"Murder!" he roared in sounds to lift the dead.

His terrified senses told him it was no stone, but a living thing, which had struck him on the back. Something had leaped on him. Something clung about him with hooks of steel.

Mighty, insane terror came to the bully, the coward. He could hear nothing but his own roarings. Foul visions of mountain panthers, of wolves, of beasts more terrible than these, mad chimeras which haunt the blackness of the woods, passed before him. And as they passed he knew it was human arms which gripped him, a human voice which snarled in his ear.

Ferald coughed as he reeled from side to side, trying to reach behind him. Hands pressed about his throat, thumbs felt for the sockets of his eyes. Heavy blows hammered on his veins, smashing him and paralyzing him till he grew sick.

Backward the tall man struggled, tossing and fighting to shake free that strangling grip.

"Ow! Ow!" he croaked, no longer able to shout, mad with pain and terror of that unknown thing which closed with hands of death about his throat.

Blood roared in his ears. Earth rocked beneath him; and, as his eyes were closed by those tearing thumbs, earth grew black. His head cracked against a tree. Staggering back, he tripped on a boulder, and fell. Gray fear loosened the strength of his muscles, palsied his spine, as he crashed to the road.

"Haw! Haw!" Ferald croaked, as if with ferocious laughter.

As blows beat on his face he heard Nancy crying:

"Nick! Nick! Don't do that! You'll kill him!"

And Dumb Nick, the idiot dwarf, shrieked as he smashed Ferald's head again and again to the dust—

"I want to kill him, kill him dead!"

The tall man was helpless beneath the crazy fury of the idiot. Blood was seeping from his nose into his mouth, and he swallowed it, a thick, winy stuff. Nick's thumbs gouged at his eyes again with a madman's pitilessness.

AROUND the bend of the road men were running from Doom Vale. They came in a straggling stream, as they had been aroused by hearing those distant screams from the wood. Nibbick Craven, gasping hoarsely, ran first and fastest, and close at his heels followed other men.

They leaped at Nick, grasped him by shoes, pants and collar and flung him high and heavily away. Blind with nausea, Ferald stumbled up, wiping his bloody mouth, spitting furtively to right and left.

Nancy Cass at first sight of Craven had gone more deeply into the woods. They could see her no more, though Craven glared about him with beet-red eyes.

"What's this? What's this?" Craven howled. "What's this crazy lunatic been doing to you, Mr. Ferald? Has this insane idiot been hurting you, Mr. Ferald?"

"Not so much, not so much," muttered Ferald, trying to hide his face, feeling for broken teeth.

Passionately Craven rushed on Nick, who lay face down in the dust. Veins charged with blood gleamed in his eyes. He gasped as he gathered strength for a furious kick. He kicked, and he would have trodden Nick as he would a crawling worm.

Other men were running, or puffing, or staggering to the place. Rance Perdee drove up in a Ford, Judge Purly and old Nigus Cairnstone with him.

"I've had enough of you, idiot!" Craven said hoarsely. "You ought to be thankful you're alive—crazy, driveling, sawed-off lunatic! I got a good notion to chop off your head and grind you up for dog-meat."

Savagely he hauled the terrified, sullen dwarf to his feet. Men pressed closer, forming a menacing ring.

"Lynch him," whispered Snellerjohn.

"I'd say it was a good idea," muttered Val Perkins. "That crazy loon'll kill us all some day if you don't watch out."

Nigus Cairnstone, the undertaker and furniture upholsterer, gray and old, though gray less from years than from the ashes

of dead desires, and old more for rotten thoughts than for the rottenness of age, stood apart, watching the excited and turbulent men like a carrion bird on a fence. His lips were twisted, but he never laughed.

Craven gave Nick a push which sent him sprawling into the arms of a half-dozen men.

"I'll not meddle with such truck," he said. "Far as I'm concerned, I'm through with him."

Elaborately he turned his back and walked away, carrying the law with him. Harold Ferald, limping painfully, leaned on Craven's shoulder.

"Well, why not?" asked Snellerjohn, turning to Bub Ladd for support.

"Why not, I'd like to know?" mumbled Ladd, turning uncertainly to other faces. "Ain't you all tired of seeing his crazy, ugly, idiot face around every place you go?"

"Now be careful," squeaked Judge Purly.

But every man knew the judge was a bubble, and they didn't listen to him.

They did not mean to hurt the muttering, shaking lunatic. But no man said, "No." And each man was afraid to be first to stop the ugly thing now threatening. With a gesture of defiance, loudly showing—as weak and cowardly men show—that his deeds were as good as his words, Bub Ladd unbuckled a long leather strap from his postman's bag, which hung empty over his shoulder.

Val Perkins took it. With nervous fingers, looking to other men for support, he wound it around Nick's throat. The idiot twisted. He began to mutter in low, raucous groans. Three men held him fast.

In a straggling, uneven mass the men, looking for the others to show them the way in this cruel thing, began to edge and push their way toward a worm-bitten apple-tree which stood at the edge of the woods. They pushed Nick, and rolled him on as a snowball rolls a stone.

"Well," said Val Perkins, "I guess this'll teach him a lesson."

"Well, I guess it'll teach him a lesson, all right," said Rance Perdee.

"And I don't guess he'll forget it," said Doc Snellerjohn, pale and frightened to see how far things were going, yet determined to have his foolish joke.

"That idiot never was no good nohow," said Noel Cleaves, his teeth chattering.

Nigus Cairnstone said nothing. He walked behind with his hands clasped, his head aslant. And never more had he looked like a buzzard on a fence. Nils Chubb, a pink-faced country lout, a tormentor of pigs and torturer of dogs, jumped and swung the loose end of the strap over a low limb of the gnarled apple-tree.

"Wish Nebulus was here, Mr. Cairnstone," said Bub Ladd. "He'd fix this idiot, ol' Nebulus would."

But it looked as if they would be quite able to fix Nick without the aid of gray old Cairnstone's son.

"Mr. Perkins!" groaned the strangling dwarf. "Mr. Lyons! Mr. Cleaves! Judge Purly! Don't hurt me, gentlemen! Don't hurt poor Dumb Nick. I've always tried to be a good boy, gentlemen, and do as I was told."

Old Bub Ladd snarled with senile fury.

"Trying to murder Mr. Ferald! Yes, and following me down the street when I'm on business of the United States Postal Service. Yes, and talking up to intelligent men as though your poor idiot brains had sense. You've been a good boy, all right! We'll good-boy you!"

Judge Purly stretched forth his thick, soft arms.

"I warn you," he cried shrilly. "I wash my hands of this."

Bub Ladd, growing more frenetic with his own frenzy, spat slaver from his lips.

"If you'd washed your hands of Nero Cram," he said, "we'd be better off today."

Val Perkins had his hands on the slack end of the strap. Other hands tightened beside his. Eight men or more—each looking to the others to lead him in this thing, each one not willing to do it alone or to do it at all—pulled slowly together.

Once Nick went off the ground, heels and toes. His face puffed with red and purple. They let him down, and he croaked loudly. Once more they pulled him up, and let him down. At the third time they hauled on the strap his face was growing black, and he did not cry again.

And they let him down till his toes touched, and then his heels. They slacked the strap till Nick slid to the withered leaves and grass. He tumbled in a huddle. No man knew if he was yet alive. No man looked above the level of the ground, yet no man looked at Nick. Val Perkins wiped his palms on his thighs, as though he would wipe away the chafing of the strap. Each man was terrified of what he had been doing.

Terrified of what he had been doing, and of what might come. They saw a man down the road, walking swiftly and heavily. His countenance was dark in the falling sun's shadows.

Where Marc Oren was when Nick fell on Harold Ferald does not matter, nor how he knew what those men were doing under the stunted apple-tree. But he walked straight toward them, fierce and angry, and with his arms tightened to strike blows.

"Who's that fellow?" Doc Snellerjohn asked Rance Perdee when Oren was still rods away. "Looks like he was in a hurry."

"Who's that?" Daniel Lyons asked Noel Cleaves, his cold lips sticking to his teeth, and afraid for no reason at all.

"I don't know," Cleaves muttered. "Who is it?"

"I reckon we might as well be going now," muttered Bub Ladd, watching Oren striding dangerously nearer. "We've taught Nick a lesson."

Val Perkins squinted his eyes.

"That's Mr. Oren, from Florida," he said. "I thought at first it was somebody."

"Oh!" said Bub Ladd. "I think we might as well be going."

In a cowering, whispering ring they waited till Marc Oren came among them. Whatever doubt and hesitation he had shown since Doom Vale knew him was now gone. The space between his eyes was cleft by a heavy scowl.

Val Perkins had spread gossip that morning that Marc Oren came from the South, where people have strange notions about stringing up white men. Oren might not like to see a white man swinging from a sour apple-tree—even Dumb Nick, the idiot dwarf.

Oren carried no visible threat. Nils Chubb, sturdy and young, could have thrown Oren in five minutes of catch-as-catch-can wrestling. The mob of them could have trampled him to mud beneath their feet. But so determined was he, so grim, so set and unafraid, that each man wished he were underneath a bush where he might crawl and hide.

"Well," said Oren, out of a heavy silence, "I think you know me?"

It was half a question, half a threat. He frowned as if he were expecting answer to an elusive and puzzling question, but was prepared to meet any answer.

The right hand of Perkins reached tremblingly for his white mustaches.

"Evening, Mr. Oren," he whispered. "*I* know you."

Val Perkins himself was not sure if he had spoken, or only thought.

"So you know me?" cried Oren, heeling suddenly, but not turning his back to any man.

Again Val Perkins heard the echo of his own voice whispering:

"Yes, sir. Of course I know you. You're Mr. Oren."

Oren shook his head, scowling. Uneasily, sidestepping and gently jostling, men were trying to hide behind their neighbors. Already several men had the suspicion—which gossip later elaborated—that Oren was some sort of Government agent, perhaps an Army intelligence officer from West Point.

Oren knelt beside Nick, and with a sharp, bright knife cut away the strap from his neck. Deeply the idiot sighed.

Several men had already departed, sneaking off furtively, following roundabout trails to their homes. Oren lifted Nick by the shoulders and carried him to Rance Perdee's little car.

"I'm going to say a few things more to you fellows when I remember it," he said ambiguously.

Yet he had said hardly a word.

Without asking leave he turned Perdee's little car about and rolled off toward Doom Vale. Rance Perdee didn't say anything. Judge Purly, who felt frightened and ashamed, was left to carry his fat bulk on his two wabbly ankles.

"Who is that fellow Oren?" asked Daniel Lyons as he crept homeward, and the dusk deepened all about him. "He looks like some one."

"Well," whispered Doc Snellerjohn, no longer full of jokes and conscious of a solemn quaver he could not eradicate from his voice, "well, that's right."

"That's what I was a-saying to Nat Cass this very morning," stammered Noel Cleaves. "He certainly does look like some one."

"Some one, that's sure," said Dan Lyons. "Who do you think, Mr. Cairnstone?"

Old Nigus Cairnstone, walking with his eyes bent on the ground, his hands clasped beneath the tails of his long black coat, only shook his head.

"Oh, I don't know he looks like any one," said old Val Perkins uneasily. "Though when I first saw him come in the door this morning I thought, by jiminy, he does look like some one. But just who I couldn't think."

Valuable Perkins stumbled on for a pace or two.

"Didn't Mr. Oren come here once with Jack Robinson, the rich drummer from Pasadena?" he asked. "Seems to me it was with him I remembered him. They had a gay old night in the Red House. And they went away together."

"I don't remember Jack Robinson," said Dan Lyons.

"The rich drummer!" cried old Perkins. "He paid five dollars for a room. He's a good friend of Mr. Oren's."

That vouched for Marc Oren so far as Doom Vale was concerned.

FAST away from Doom Vale, away from the place beneath the gnarled apple tree where the cruel men were having their sport with Nick, Nancy Cass ran. She lost the road and stumbled through underbrush and sumac, stumbling over rotten logs felled long ago and over mighty, gray-green stones.

For a while she was on the Shaft Mine Trail, and passed by deep pits with fallen mouths of timber, black and dismal as the dens of mighty dragon snakes. Higher and higher she went, with the great trees pressing all about her, afraid of the woods and the gathering night, afraid of going on or stopping, yet terrified more than all of turning back to the villainous men of Doom Vale.

And if she had wanted to go back she could not, for she was lost completely. The sun was down, and it gave no guidance.

The forests were dry and yellow with October. Loudly katydids shrieked at her from every tree, their illimitable, innumerable voices drowning out the rustling of leaves and the soft voice of water far away with the harsh *Ka-chee! Ka-chee-chee!* of tuneless viols.

Northward lay Haverstraw, and across the high hills at the end of miles and miles of forest and winding roads was Tuxedo, where the rich had their Summer mansions. Blindly the girl struck out for what she thought was the west, where she might find the road again.

Darkness fell clumsily on the forests. Rotten leaves whispered and sank beneath her staggering feet. The night had come full and heavily when she followed the sound of whispering water and came to the brushy banks of Shadow Stream.

Once she had gone along this rivulet with Nero Cram, tramping up to its source at Shadow Dam. She had no thought of turning back now. Bushes tangled her heels; low branches slapped against her face as she toiled up.

Now the Shadow was always beside her. In Spring and Winter floods it roared down brown from the hills; but in this dry time of Autumn its thin cascades seeped over ledges of flat rock shale; its scummy pools lay black and shallow; its little meandering side streams crept beneath roofs of fallen leaves. She stepped into one of those treacherously covered rivulets, into an ooze of mud, and felt the cold water rise above her ankles.

Then she had broken clear on to an old wagon-road, Lost Man's Lane, which ran up by the dam and over the hills to the north. This road had been hewed by Nero Cram's men at the time of the building of the dam. Its stony surface was scattered with leaves and grass-overgrown, and it reverted fast to wilderness.

Soon waters muttered ahead, and in a break of trees around a turn of the curving road she saw the sheer white wall of the dam, set high up between the flanks of hills, mausoleum white in the dim shadows of the forests, and over it twinkling palely a nest of stars. A thin sheet of water trickled over the rim of its overflow, reiteratedly and everlasting spilling the reflections of the stars down to dark ruin.

High in the hills, deep in the forests, its walls extending from slope to slope of the summits, that dam was symbolic of all strength and all courage to Nancy Cass. She had not seen it from the day its last gate had been closed and she had stood by Nero Cram while the waters which were to be Shadow Pond began to gather behind it.

With a moan, part exaltation and part terror, she stumbled up the rocky way, seeking in the giant wall of concrete a refuge from all trouble and all fears. But swiftly her trembling came over her again.

She looked behind. No twig snapped. No bush stirred. But she was overwhelmed with consciousness that she was being followed.

A grisly presence pervaded all the forests. Again she looked behind. She stopped, listening with both hands clutched over her heart. The woods were thin with the cry of wind and the far lapping of water.

With a faint scream Nancy ran up the steep road, tripping and gasping, struggling with failing strength to reach the dam, to hide in the shadow of its strength from the horror of that unseen presence. Over a round boulder she fell on bruised knees; but in the instant she was up again and running forward. She was now in the shadow of the dam, and the stars grew brighter above. But still she was overwhelmed with consciousness of that terror creeping in the night.

With rasped, hoarse throat she screamed—

"I know you're there!"

Hush! No answer. The dam wall thundered back her cry with deep and solemn sound. Some great night bird, probably an owl, darted from the woods through crashing leaves and sailed high, dwindling into the night.

Hush! No other sound. Who did she know was there?

And where was he who she knew was there? Where was he hiding? With what murderous eyes was he staring? With what soft footfalls did he creep, and flit, and leap? What demons crept beside him?

Nancy clawed at the cold, rough wall of the dam and fell against it, trying to merge herself in it, to put its massive strength between herself and the thing which crawled toward her. Her fingers felt near the base the outline of lettering, deep-molded to last for eternity—

SHADOW DAM
BUILT BY THE STATE OF NEW YORK
NERO CRAM, ENGINEER.

Her knees gave way beneath her.

"I hear you!" she gasped, beating with bruised fists at the dam. "I know you're there! I'm not afraid!"

Far away over the hills she heard the heavy thunder of a motor-car, growing slowly louder as it felt its way on steep, dangerous roads. But she heard no other sound.

Nancy saw the whiteness of the weeping stars pale in pity for her. All strength went from her knees. A clutching dumbness stifled her cries. Constantly, and more clearly now, she was aware of that presence near. It—it was near!

The bed of leaves toward which her shaking hands sank was thick and soft. As she sank toward it the leaves rustled. They stirred from underneath. They overturned, showing dank rot below. A winding body crept sluggishly away. In a brief flash she saw it all, saw the steady, blazing eyes, the lipping, licking tongue of a brown-and-saffron timber rattler.

As she leaped away from that dismal terror she screamed loudly. She ran madly up the steep flank of a hill.

"I know you're there! Why don't you say something? I know you're there!"

A ferret, lean and lithe, red on the mid-murk prowl, leaped across her path. Its glossy serpentine body arched delicately. Little wood mice were squeaking and running in every direction before it, their short legs carrying them swiftly, but not so swiftly as the long, easy lope of the ferret.

With soft, dark eyes the ferret looked casually at the girl. Its jowls were thick with sanguine froth. It pounced almost at her feet. A doomed beast squeaked, no more willing than a man to face the horror of great death.

The teeth of the ferret closed. It shook its head, drunk and satiated with blood, shuddering delicately. Then it leaped on.

The time had been no more than the snapping of a twig. But in that time a life had been wiped, ultimately and unreturnably, from this teeming world. Swift as a dream Nancy, running and climbing, saw each lithe, murderous gesture of that cruel beast. The horror of its hunting would be a nightmare in her sleep for years.

"I know you're there!" she panted over her shoulder. "I'm not afraid!"

Each distant hill, the demons in each tree, took up her defiant cry. Brave heart, Nancy! Brave blood in it. Your father, Nathan Cass, was a brave lad in the ring when he was young. And they say your mother stabbed a bully in Havana.

Twigs snapped behind. Bushes crashed, leaves rustled. Stones, kicked from their beds, rattled down into echoing voids. From the base of the dam, swift and merciless up the slope of the hill, he, the Fool Killer, was following her! Some one was running, running after her!

Loud the stones rattled. Bushes were trampled asunder. Nancy heard the hoarse breathing of a man, heard his voiceless,

deadly, still pursuit as he came after her to murder.

As she staggered up and burst on to Lost Man's Lane again she cast one look down and behind her. She saw——

Oh, here in the black woods it was too dark to see, and her eyes were too filled with horror to see. But she caught sight of a great shadow, of eyes pointed with fire by some reflection of the deepening stars.

She was the first, she was the last, to see the Fool Killer and remain alive.

"Help! Help me!" she screamed with her last breath. "He'll kill me!"

Ahead of her up Lost Man's Lane, creeping around the fringe of Shadow Pond and down to the dam, long headlights gleamed. They came through a mantle of trees, swifter now, and Nancy felt their glare upon her. She leaped and fell in those bright yellow rays as they made visible the road.

The dragon snort of an automobile roared. The headlights, bumping up and down on the rocky road, settled to glaring expectancy. They shone on tall, still ranks of trees, and were reflected back in ghostly white.

Whoever it was, whatever it was which had pursued her up the hill, skulked deep in the darkness. It dared not show its murderous face in the white light of the steady lamps.

This was the car of Warden Drew, coming back by way of the hills from West Point. He and two of his guards came running down the road. They crouched as they ran, holding guns in their hands, staring deeply to both sides of them as they hurried toward Nancy.

"He's there! He's there!" she whispered.

They wasted no time. Swiftly the two guards leaped down the hill, while Drew stood beside the girl. With sudden fury Drew filled his lungs with shouts, thrusting out his fist at the tenebrous woods.

"We'll get you now, you stinking, sticking dog!"

Shaking with anger, he turned to Nancy.

"Excuse me," he said. "Excuse me."

Down into ravines dropped the voices of the searching guards. They had reached the bottom of the dam, where Nancy had halted. Deeply they shouted to each other. On little hills their flashlights shone.

Mysteriously terrible, like solitary demons in the vales and forests of a somber, houseless hell, they wandered back and forth, and high, and deep. Here they were, and there, in gully or on crest, as if they flew on big bat wings through the obscurities of those tangled forests.

And at the last they came back, one man walking the top of the dam, wading the overflow, another crawling toilsomely up the hill. Centuries had passed, such centuries as are known to eternity, counted by the ticking of a watch. The guards were torn and dusty, and, though the night was growing bitter chill and a north wind was rising, sweat had marked their faces with long smudges. They wiped their scratched faces, which bush and branch had torn.

"The lady's dreaming," said Officer 17 harshly. "There's not sign of man around here, I'll take oath to it on the Bible."

"He beat it for New York," said Officer 338, breathing gustily. "That tip we got in Haverstraw must be right; that fellow picked up by the police in New York was our friend, all right."

Warden Drew gazed furiously at the shivering silences of the forests.

"I had a hunch—a hunch," he argued. "Well, maybe I was wrong."

"No fellow 'd be fool enough to come up here," said 338 with conviction. "What'd he live on? He'd die."

"What did this man you saw look like?" asked Drew, turning to Nancy.

"I didn't see—well," she whispered.

Drew shook his head. Suddenly he dismissed all belief in the near presence of the Killer. With an abrupt gesture he thrust his pistol in its holster.

"Some hunter, likely. Or maybe it was one of these hill-billies. They wouldn't be above chasing a girl—not one so pretty as you, young lady."

"What are you going to do with me?" gasped Nance. "Don't leave me here with him!"

"What's the idea of wandering out this way after dark?" asked Drew, not unkindly. "We'll take you home."

Cautiously the prison car bumped down the stony, winding trail of Lost Man's Lane. Behind it towered, as it went down the road, the blank bone-whiteness of the dam wall, like the side of a Nilotic pyramid, like the slab of a mighty sarcophagus, an incomprehensible giant tomb set alone within the wilderness hills, holding back avalanchal waters with its hand.

And the Killer, creeping fast in the night, went by short trails he knew down the steep

sides of rocks and through ravines toward Doom Vale.

THE night grew chill. Down on Doom Vale rushed keen wind, sweeping through the cleft of the river valley from the north. After a noon so hot, a day so bright, the wind was piercing thin.

Marc Oren had eaten the salt and drunk the water of Doom Vale; but as yet he had not found what he wanted to find, nor done what he came here to do. After supper he was on the street. He looked up at the windows where Wayne had told him Nancy Cass lived, and saw them dark. Below, in Dan Lyons' store, were lights and a stove which was beginning to glow red.

Idle men drifted one by one into the shop as they came from supper, and gathered about the store. They warmed themselves, alternately front and rear.

In the evenings when there was no other recreation save the dun dullness of sleep, Doom Vale men—those who considered themselves men, the blood, the heart, the life of Doom Vale—liked to gather in some tacitly understood meeting-place, the grocery, the drugstore, or George W. Wayne's legal offices. There they talked, and smoked, and chewed, and spat, and held great powwow, settling the destinies of kingdoms and empires, and telling jests about women which were old when Adam begat Cain. Later they might wander to the Red House or to the Social Club, where poker was played to any hour of night, and thence home.

Oren looked in the windows for a hesitating few minutes. Above the line of carpenter's planes, axes, hoes, boxed garden seed, paint-cans, knives, pistols and door-bolts which filled the show window he saw the stove in the store's center gleaming dull maroon. Cold wind bit like frost into Oren's spine, and he thought of going in.

Around the stove men in black silhouette stood or sat or paced with the calm resignment, the absence of all pain, of burning men chained to a torture pyre who have grown inured to the consuming heat, and watch their own flesh bake and loosen indifferently. Stir them up with a kick or a burning brand, and they might rise to life and agony; but only for a little while.

They were shadows of men, black flat shapes without depth, outlined against the light. Oren watched them, and recognized them only as shadows. A gesture, the turning of a hand, the sagging of a shoulder or the shaking of a jaw fascinated him, for it brought up untenable memories from the misty realms of dreams.

"Where have I seen those gestures, known those men before?" his doubtful pondering might have been. "Have I seen those gestures, known those men before?"

Oren had a brief delusion of reincarnation, like a deluge of sorrow tingling his nerves, wondering whether he had known this picture all before in some inter-vital limbo. And then he wondered whether the sight of those shadowy men was not all hallucination, an insane fantasy; for Oren himself was not certain he was sane.

Oren did not go in among the Doom Vale men. Scowling, he stepped back into darkness beyond the light.

Around the stove they warmed their hands. They listened to the wind, swift-rushing from the gap of the river valley, from the whistling passes of the summits which tower above Doom Vale, muttering a long:

"*Hush-sh! Who? Who? Hush-sh!*"

Nibbick Craven spat, watching the red iron of the stove sizzle and blacken about the spot.

Dan Lyons was exploring the dark recesses of his store, with grunts, groans, whistlings and clattering sounds. He dug into boxes packed with tissue-wrapped pig-iron tools; he opened and slammed show-cases; he peered into secret compartments behind his red pine counters; he climbed high to comb the rafters.

"Any o' you boys seen a coil o' new rope lying around?" he asked. "I had a brand-new consignment come in yesterday."

On his hands and knees he prowled over the floor, mumbling. Again he climbed on piles of boxes almost to the ceiling, among a festoon of sprinkling-cans, hoes, cuspidors, tin pails, wire netting, wash-basins and garden fence hung to the rafters.

He climbed carefully down. Reflectively he stepped on a roach which raced across the floor.

"What happened to that there coil of rope? Now that's a queer thing!"

"Maybe Cleaves cut it up to make some Pittsburgh cigars," said Snellerjohn, looking around for the vacant laugh.

"It was good Manila rope," said Lyons,

"and it cost me money." He thought heavily.

"It was around here this morning. But now it's gone."

"A coil o' rope ain't going to take its tail in its mouth and roll off like a hoop-snake," Craven yawned, arising and leaning over a showcase filled with hunting-knives and pistols. "Maybe that idiot Nick knows something about it."

"He don't know nothing," Dan Lyons said gloomily.

"He's always hanging around your place."

"I'll hang him," said Lyons.

"Nobody'd want to steal a ol' coil o' rope," stated Nibbick Craven, authority in Doom Vale on crime and criminals. "What's it good for, except to hang a man?"

"Enough for that," said Dan Lyons.

"Enough to hang twelve men, I bet you."

"I bet you there was," said Lyons. "Enough for twelve or thirteen."

"What could have happened to your rope?" asked Nibbick Craven.

"I don't know," Lyons said sadly. "That's what I want to know."

"Nobody's going to steal rope," said Perkins. "What could have happened to it?"

"I don't know," Lyons repeated sourly. "That's what I want to know."

"What do you think could have happened to it?" asked Rance Perdee.

"I don't know," Lyons said hoarsely. "That's what I want to know."

Doc Snellerjohn rubbed his sharp nose, which was always red.

"Well, what could have happened to it?" he asked.

"I don't know! That's what I want to know!" Lyons screeched. "What do you think I'm talking for, you fool—to blow away the splinters in your wood-alcohol breath?"

"Do you think I took your cotton junk?" barked Snellerjohn.

"No! No! I just want to find that rope. It was around here yesterday or today. But now it's gone."

Soft in the door, sliding in gently, came old Cairnstone, the gray old, dry old undertaker and second-hand man.

"What's this I hear?" he asked softly. "You lost enough rope to hang thirteen men, Dan? What could have happened to it?"

Dan Lyons picked up a box of electric-light bulbs, and hurled them heavily to the floor.

As Oren turned away from the window of the hardware shop Warden Drew's automobile came down the street. Oren walked away as it came to a stop. Nancy Cass, whom he had said he was curious to meet, got out and ran swiftly up the hall stairs. Warden Drew said:

"Don't you be afraid, Miss Cass. I'm stopping in town tonight."

His voice sounded crisp and sharp. Oren saw him enter Lyons' door.

"Back again, mister?" Nibbick Craven called as he saw Drew entering. "Ain't found that fellow Cram yet, by any chance?"

Drew slipped off his gloves.

"Not by any chance," he said.

"Well, keep up your work," said Craven boldly. "You don't need to worry about me. I'll be watching for this Killer. Have a cigar on me."

Drew closed his lips.

"Not by any chance," he said.

"Hey, what's the matter, mister?" cried Craven angrily. "Have this here smoke to show we're friends."

"Not by any chance," said Drew, unable to say more because of fury.

The butcher-marshal boiled red. He coughed and growled.

"All right! All right!" he blustered. "What's eating you, mister?"

The warden was not a big man. But he walked straight and fearlessly up to Craven, and he stuck his index finger in Craven's ribs. Craven grunted.

"While we were looking for the Killer up by Shadow Pond," Drew stated, "we found a girl. She said you'd chased her out of town. What do you say?"

Craven swallowed.

"I reckon you mean Nance Cass," he said.

"If ever I saw a decent girl," stammered Drew, dumb with anger, swallowing also, "that girl is Miss Cass."

"Then you ain't seen very many," Craven muttered. "I didn't say nothing!" he roared loudly and belligerently as Drew closed his fist.

"All right," said Drew. "This girl tells me you and the rest of the toughs in the town have made it your business to hound her. She's told me other things, too, which if I were sure of, I'd clap you under arrest right now!"

Craven had red blood in him; he was no trembling knave.

"That girl's no good," he said viciously, rising to confront Drew, squaring his heavy shoulders. "You're making a fool of yourself when you get mixed up with her, mister. Ain't she the daughter of old Nat Cass? She's brought too much trouble on this town. She—*she's* no good."

"Say that again," suggested Drew.

"They say she's no good," muttered Craven.

"Who says it?" Drew asked loudly, scowling at the faces behind Craven, which shifted dimly and uneasily in the shadows. "Which one of you says it?"

No one answered.

"I ain't got anything particular against Nance," Craven said.

Drew smiled with cold ferocity.

"That girl is nothing to me, you understand. But I want to state so you can hear that if ever I catch any hooligan hurting her I'll skin his hide off and use it for a hunting-shirt. You heard me!"

Craven kicked at the floor.

"I ain't deaf," he muttered.

"And you're not dumb," said Drew coldly. "You got me."

Still smiling unpleasantly, he turned and strode toward the door. Val Perkins, understanding Drew was looking for overnight accommodations, arose and followed him.

"Hey!" Craven called. "You want to find out something about Nero Cram?"

The warden, deep in surly silence, did not answer.

"Nero Cram and Nance, they hung around together," said Craven. "If you want to find out where he is now, you ask her. I bet she knows."

Drew stopped dead still, impelled to walk back to Craven.

"I don't believe it!" he said.

"Oh, is that so?" queried Craven in high key. "Well, maybe you don't believe it. And maybe you are smart. But Nance and the man who killed your brother understood each other. If ever in New York, or wherever he is, you happen to meet a fellow by the name o' Nebulus Cairnstone, you just ask him what Nance and that fellow Cram did to him. They tried to murder him! Nebulus knows, all right. He knows all about Nance."

Drew said nothing, but after more hesitation went out the door. He walked across the street to Perkins Inn. There Valuable Perkins put Drew and his three officers in bedrooms on either side of the room of Mr. Oren.

"I'll ask Mr. Oren not to make no noise when he comes in," said Perkins. "He was sleeping almost all the morning, so he may be up till later. And I reckon you are tired."

AT TEN that night Nathan Cass, the gambler, had his one-horse trap at the railroad station, waiting for the New York train. He sat with shoulders sagging, half-asleep, the creases and folds of his face dropping like an empty sack. In the darkness, which was made more treacherous and deep by the single light of the station platform, Cass looked in the full what he was, the minister of evil to Doom Vale, and servant of its sins.

Many years ago Nathan Cass had been a strong man, striking a heavy blow, quick as a tiger on his feet, young and lithe and invincible—K. O. Cass, the boy from Troy, who was being talked of to fight the blacksmith Jefferies. But Nathan Cass had lost his heart to a Spanish dancer, and when she died the liquor got him. After long wanderings he and his daughter had been cast in Doom Vale like jellyfish left on sands by the receding tide.

The name of K. O. Cass was forgotten. Youth had gone from him. His quick eye was dulled, his strength was that of water. But yet he was a power in this little river town, and a tower of evil.

The ten-o'clock train came in, and Nathan Cass ambled up to the door of the express car. The express messenger hailed him, pushing a box toward the door.

"Easy! Take it easy!" Cass warned.

He got beneath the box with his shoulders and slid it gently to the graveled platform.

"Some more books?" asked the messenger.

"Yeah," Cass said.

"Yeah?" queried the express messenger. "I know a guy who's got him a job as rum-hound for the Gov'ment——"

Cass spat.

"Tell him what you want to if you're that kind of a fellow."

"I'm not that kind of a fellow," the messenger denied warmly. "What you think I am? I'm a regular guy."

He squatted on his haunches in the car door, biting the cigar which Cass gave him.

"You know me, Nat."

"Sure. Stop off the next time you deadhead up this way. I'll fix you up."

"Thanks. I'll do that. Say, what you heard about the guy who busted out of Sing Sing last night?"

"Haven't they got him yet?" Nathan Cass asked.

"Not yet," said the messenger. "Two or three times we heard they'd got him in New York. But not yet."

"I hope they get him, and sock him all 'at's coming to him!" said Cass.

The express messenger stared over Cass' head, peering into shadows. Over the town he looked at the Hudson. Few lights shone on the river, and few in the town. The messenger hugged his knees and blew long smoke.

"I hope they get him, too," he said. "I've been seeing things all the way up. It ain't any fun to have a murdering baby like that loose. You know those queer feelings a guy gets."

"I'm not afraid of nothing," said Cass.

"Neither am I. But just supposing this son-of-a-gun——"

"Nobody ever killed me yet," said Nathan Cass.

"No, that's right," said the express messenger, trying to laugh.

The mail clerk shouted from the car behind the express car as the train began to roll away:

"Here's a letter. Give it to old Bub Ladd."

Cass thumbed the letter.

"From Sing Sing," he read, "for Nibbick Craven. Something about this Killer, I bet."

"They're sending out his picture with notices of rewards," said the mail clerk. "Five thousand berries! Hey!" he shouted, leaning out the door as the train drew away. "I got a picture posted up inside the car. Want to see it?"

Cass started to run, but the train was gathering speed. Snorting like a hippopotamus, crowned with fire, wreathed with pale lilies of steam, the engine tore into the night. Far down the track its red and green taillights faded, and went around a turn of the hills.

With grunting effort Cass pushed the express box across the crunching gravel and hoisted it into his ancient buggy. The contents of the box rang like glass.

"Fine laws that make an honest man feel like a crook!" thought Cass, peering about him for spying prohibition men.

A stirring in the shadows, the dimly caught glimpse of a man around the darkest end of the little boxlike depot, frightened Cass. Nibbick Craven, that heavy fool, was fixed; he'd never interfere. But some man, like Harold Ferald or Bub Ladd, might take it into his head to make trouble. Nathan Cass slapped the reins on his horse's back.

Some one was at the horse's head. Nathan Cass picked up his stock whip.

"Who are you? What do you want?" Cass said hoarsely.

The man kept silent, as if meditating swift and dangerous action. Cass was aware of a close scrutiny. Holding with one hand to the shafts, the man walked slowly back to Cass. His hat, too small for his head, was pulled low.

"Thought I recognized you, Mr. Cass," he said.

Cass stared, bending forward.

"I can't see you."

The man stepped up beside him, pushing back his hat.

"I'm Nebulus Cairnstone," he said.

The gambler smoothed his face.

"You gave me a scare, boy! Well, well! Didn't know you were coming back to town. Hop in!"

The plump face of Nebulus Cairnstone, with its crooked and unmerry smile, had grown a little leaner and harder, Nathan Cass saw. His thin pink hair was a little thinner. His loose lips were pressed together as if he, the talker, had learned the tremendous oratory of silence. His slashingly-cut New York clothes of green-plaid weave had not however yet learned to hide the country-lout air of him.

Nathan Cass was yet uneasy. His heart jerked and pained him. The sudden appearance of Nebulus, the crying silences all about him, the coldness of the wind, the watchful uneasiness for the Killer who roamed free in the dark night, made Cass breathe quick and heavy.

But as he stared Nebulus up and down he regained his self-possession. Cass had always held the second-hand man's son, the aspiring village gay dog, in no secret contempt. He was accustomed to address Nebulus as "Chicken-Feed" or "Jelly-Bean," or "Near-Beer," or in other ways to show Nebulus he was not one of the

regular fellows such as once had been pals of K. O. Cass.

"You look prosperous, Hot Stuff," said Cass with a grunt. "Where you been? When'd you come back? What you been doing—selling hooch?"

Looking all about him, Nebulus climbed carefully into the rickety trap. He propped his feet on the box of liquor, so his knees were lifted to the level of his chin. Cass observed a long rent in one knee of the smart green-checked suit, and Nebulus' too tight shoes were scratched and muddy. Cass inferred, wise gambler that he was, that business had not prospered with old Nigus Cairnstone's son.

"Been a long time you been away," said Cass as he drove toward the center of town. "Been about three months, I reckon. How you been?"

Nebulus Cairnstone did not answer. His hands were deep in his pockets, and he had pulled up his coat collar about his ears. He had no overcoat, and as he bounced up and down with the rattling of the loose-jointed trap he shivered and shivered all over.

"Everything's quiet here," Cass heard him mumble. "Like being in China. Gosh! Gosh! You never read or hear or do anything here, do you?"

An upward steamer sent forth waves which struck the Hudson's shores like ocean surge, heavily hammering, and still again. The steamer hooted. Cass and Nebulus both started.

"Oh, we're slow," said Cass contemptuously, "compared to the smart guys who loaf up and down Broadway, spitting like it didn't cost a nickel. We're not in the class of you city sports, Near-Beer."

Nathan Cass grew boasting and angry, thinking of days when he had pranced in the city dives, drunk and loud and proud, famous as a king.

"Listen to me, boy!" he said heavily. "When I was your age and younger I saw it all. I saw New York and Chicago and Cleveland and St. Louis. I been around. I fought in seven cities. Listen to me, Two-for-a-pint! I've drunk more liquor straight, and known more women, and shook the bones for bigger wads than you'll ever do if you live to be a hundred and ninety-two. It don't make any difference where you go, you'll find every regular guy remembers K. O. Cass. Just tell 'em you're a friend of K. O. Cass. Why, one time I remember——"

Nebulus was not listening. And it would have done him no good if he had. Since the ancient days when Nathan Cass had been one regular Tough Egg among the wise boys, a hundred tough eggs had sprouted, and been boiled, and devilled, and consumed. No one would remember K. O. Cass from Nebuchadnezzar.

On Black Street Cass saw old Bub Ladd scurrying, swinging his thin arms and hopping for the cold. Cass stopped his horse as Ladd drew near, and shouted.

"A letter for Craven!" he shouted. "Want to take it, Bub?"

The postman came up and stood by the trap, shaking and slapping his hands against his chest.

"Say, Nebulus, where you been? Been painting up New York, hey? We been having some exciting times here, all right. Too bad you missed 'em."

He took the letter Cass offered.

"Careful of it," Cass said. "It's from Sing Sing. It's got a picture, and all about the Killer. Nero Cram——"

Nebulus dug his strong hands into Cass' arm. The gambler winced. He turned his head, and was startled by the twisted terror on the face of Nebulus.

"Ouch!" Cass said. "You're hurting me, boy."

Nebulus Cairnstone wet his distorted lips. He mouthed silent words.

"Haven't you heard Cram got away?" asked Cass curiously. "He killed Warden Drew's brother, who was visiting the prison last night, and he busted clean away. They ain't got him yet."

Nebulus rolled up his eyes. He looked sick to retching.

"Cram!" he whispered. "Cram!"

"You don't need to worry about him," said Cass, none too boldly. "He won't come back *here*. He better not."

They left Bub Ladd in the street, fingering the letter curiously. In Dan Lyons' shop light still shone, but the windows of Nancy Cass' room above were dark. Cass threw a glance upward as he pulled his horse to a halt.

"You didn't come back to get Nance, did you, Nebulus?" he asked abruptly.

"Nance?" echoed Nebulus as if the name were one he had never heard. "No," he

said with a jerk, shaking his head. "——! No!" he swore.

"What's the matter with her?" Cass asked, his eyes narrowing. "Do you hold it against her still that she let Cram turn her head?"

Nebulus leaped straight up. He turned to Cass in trembling fury.

"If you say that name again," he snarled, "I'll cut your throat!"

Nathan Cass climbed down and tied his horse. Viciously he whipped the beast. From the darkness of a doorway Cairnstone's mastiff, Night, skulked. It sniffed up at Nebulus, its nose crinkling, but gave no other sign of recognition of its master's son. On dragging legs it skulked back to the shadows.

"You're pretty hard, Jelly-Bean," Cass said tensely. "I'll show you if you talk that way to me. Yes, sir, I'll show you!'

CAUTIOUSLY Nebulus followed Cass into the hardware store. The fire was dying in the stove, and the rust-red heat of its iron belly grew gray. Nibbick Craven, Dan Lyons, Snellerjohn, Rance Perdee and Judge Purly yawned about it, stretching their legs, summoning up energy to go home.

"Where'd you come from, Nebulus?" asked Dan Lyons. "Thought you was making a million dollars in New York."

"The police ain't after you, are they?" Nibbick Craven yawned. "You look kind of nervous, boy. Been in trouble about a woman again?"

Nebulus slunk to a seat in the farthest edge of the circle. One after the other he stared at the old familiar faces, finding them curiously unfamiliar, as if they were the countenances of the dead.

"Afraid that fellow Cram is after you?" squeaked Judge Purly.

Nebulus half-rose from his seat, crouching on his knees.

"I didn't come here to listen to your funny talk," he choked.

"You'll take what you get when you're around here," said Nibbick Craven loudly. "If you don't like it, you can go back where you came from."

Not one of these men who had known Nebulus from a boy was able to mark the hardness, the suppressed fierceness which had come over him. But though they still considered him the village fool, the shallow sport, the inconsequential son of the undertaker and second-hand man, Nebulus Cairnstone had got his growth in fierceness. His looks were watchful and dangerous.

"You fools!" he muttered. "I'll show you——"

"You Hot Stuff!" yelled Craven cheerfully and fiercely, leaning over toward Nebulus and showing his closed fist. "You daren't make a face at little Willie McGudgeon without spitting green. You didn't have guts enough to shoot that fellow Cram like a white man, when he was stealing your girl from under your nose, but you had to call in me and the law to help you."

Nebulus did not listen to the butcher-marshal's scorn. He had grown tense. He listened with his whole body. He stared in front of him, looking at no one, but at a great horror in the shadows beyond the stove. Supreme and insane terror was in his face. His locked knuckles cracked.

Slowly, his neck rigid, with infinite horror he turned. He stared behind him. He was half-crouched, ready to slide to the floor, ready to leap and run. What he feared to see he did not tell. No one was behind him but Nick, the crazy dwarf.

"Mr. Ladd, he's got a letter for you, Mr. Craven," Nick was saying, watchful and frightened. "He wants to know will you come and get it?"

"All right, all right!" Craven said furiously. "Get out, you fool!"

The dwarf slipped out. Nebulus continued to stare at the vacant door, stiff as a man with a broken neck, pale as a dead man.

"Who was there?" Nebulus whispered.

"Why, no one was there," Craven said contemptuously.

"Some one was there!"

"Dumb Nick, the fool, he was there."

"Some one else!" said Nebulus in a voice rising to a scream.

"What's the matter with you, boy?" Judge Purly. "Mr. Oren, from Florida, stuck his head in the doorway a minute. But he's gone away again."

Nebulus softly wiped his pale eyes. His hand was trembling. His Adam's apple moved. Craven winked at Nathan Cass.

"What did you think was a-going to get you?" Craven asked. "Did you think it might be the Killer who busted out of ol' Sing Sing last night?"

The box on which Nebulus had been sitting crashed over. Nebulus stood, his shoulders bent, his hanging head shaken with fear. He could not speak for a moment; but when he spoke his voice had coarsened, and was loud and clear.

"What do you know?" he cried hoarsely.

Craven spat. He crossed his legs.

"So you've heard, too?" he grunted. "Well, it's true enough. Nero Cram killed a man and busted free last night."

"Cram," stammered Nebulus.

"You might ha' known it," said Craven. "Wish to God we'd hung him."

Nebulus felt around blindly for a seat.

"He's free!" he whispered.

"They'll find him, all right," said old Judge Purly. "They say they've got him in New York. And Cram'll get his. As sure as death he will."

Twice Nebulus Cairnstone tried to speak before he could speak.

"Cram'll get me," he whispered. "He'll do it. He said he would."

The other men watched him silently. His gray fear made them all uneasy. One man coughed, one stirred back and forth on his barrel seat, one tried to spit, but slavered on his chin. Cass pulled hard at a stub cigar which was without fire.

"You fools!" croaked Nebulus. "Oh, you simple fools! Nothing will stop Nero Cram till he's done for you and me!"

They sat looking at each other. Cass whistled, and Craven tried to laugh. But in their ears roared like sea surge the cry—

"Nero Cram will do for you and me!"

And old Dan Lyons, who leaned over a counter playing solitaire, halted his play. In his hands the spotted cards looked alike, the same cards the King of Spades, which is death.

"That letter Bub Ladd has for you from Sing Sing might tell you something," Cass said to Nibbick Craven. "Better see; better see."

Reeling from foot to foot, creeping cautiously, Nebulus went out into the dark night. Still the other men sat silently, and each one thought of Nero Cram.

It may have been ten minutes that they sat, drawing closer to the stove as heat paled in it. A telephone rang in the back of the shop, and Dan Lyons answered it.

"For you, Nib Craven," he said dimly. "It's old Bub Ladd calling you. It's about that letter."

The marshal went to the phone.

"It's me—me," he said, shifting his cigar. "Yeah, Bub?"

Came the small voice of old Bub Ladd:

"Got a letter for you from Sing Sing. Maybe it's about that Killer. Want to read it?"

Craven swore.

"Not now! I ain't worrying about him. Say," he said, "open it yourself and read it to me if it can't wait till morning."

Came the small voice of old Bub Ladd:

"All right, if you say so. Hey, wait a minute. Some one's coming in the door. Oh, it's all right. All right. Wait a minute. It says here—

"'*Warning.*'

"There's a picture—Nib! Craven!"

Nibbick Craven chewed his cigar.

"All right, I'm listening. Picture of Cram, hey? Not so loud, Bub. You'll bust my ear. What is it, Bub? Bub! Hey, Bub!"

Came the small voice of old Bub Ladd—

"Murder!"

Nibbick Craven shouted:

"Bub! Bub Ladd!"

He listened to the imperishable silences. Ferociously he clumped the receiver hook. A sleepy operator muttered:

"You're connected. Yes, sir. You're connected."

"What's happened? What's wrong?" roared Nibbick Craven.

But the small voice of old Bub Ladd did not come again.

OLD Valuable Perkins stumbled to the door of his hotel, for he heard the door creak. The night was sharp and cold, and it was past eleven. It was Marc Oren who came in. Perkins spoke to him.

"You scared me. I thought you was abed. It's pretty late."

Oren said nothing. He walked up-stairs, and out of the up-stairs door to the veranda. He sat down. Old Perkins followed him, shivering.

"Nice little town we got," said Perkins, looking uneasily at Marc Oren. "Reckon you expect to do a lot of business here?"

Oren said nothing. He lit a cigaret and blew forth smoke with an audible puff. He watched on the Hudson a million peaks of pale light rise and toss and fade away.

"Nice little town," said Perkins, more and more uneasy. "Only there's too much water around here."

Shaking with the thin night chill, he sat down on the veranda railing. He watched for a moment Oren's face, but it was hidden in darkness, and Oren's eyes were half-closed.

Perkins turned his white old head, listening sharply. The night was filled with a thousand shrill songs, with the voices of the woods and the water which lie about Doom Vale.

"Hear anything, Mr. Oren?"

"I hear nothing," said Oren after pause.

"Not a sound like water?"

"Nothing."

"Not a sound like rain?"

"I said I hear nothing."

"Maybe I was wrong," muttered Perkins. "Sometimes I wake up in the night and think I hear that sound. A sound like the dam was breaking! A sound like flood was boiling and roiling down out of those hills!"

Oren leaned back, listening. His shoulders stirred a little, and it might be he was laughing.

"If the engineer knew his business," he said, "that dam will last longer than the hills. It will never break."

"But listen, Mr. Oren!"

Oren shook his head.

"It's only wind in the trees," he said, "and wind through the hill passes."

"It sounds to me like flood was coming down," muttered Perkins obstinately. "Do you have floods in Florida?"

"Why Florida?"

"You said you come from Florida."

"I never knew of floods in Florida," said Oren with hesitation.

Old Perkins slipped down into a wicker rocker, rocking fast to keep warm. He held his cold hands beneath his armpits. Somehow he was afraid to go to bed, afraid to leave the company of Marc Oren, though Oren was no companion.

"Too much water hereabouts," Perkins complained. "Some day I'll go to Florida, where you came from."

"Where I came from?"

"Good as any. What was the name? Hell—Hell——"

"You'll find it hot," said Oren.

"Oh, I don't mind the heat. But it's all this water! The ol' Hudson undermined part of old Doom Vale once, sucked right under and caved her in. That was when the town went down to the river bluffs. Since then we've built higher. Believe me, we ain't forgot! But now there's the dam and Shadow Pond above us. That dam will break some day. I know it will!"

Creak! Creak! His chair complained. Oren had folded his arms, and his head was sunk down. He watched the cold moon tides with unwavering glances. Valuable Perkins had an impression of vast strength and calm and fearlessness. But from those qualities in Oren he could gain nothing for himself.

"The State sent down an engineer to build that pond, going on two years ago," said Perkins, timid of the silence. "It was to be for a reservoir. We didn't need no reservoir. That was a pretty valley up there, but now it's filled with water, clean chock full from hill to hill. And some of the hills are little islands in the pond. A hundred feet deep in spots Some day that dam is a-going to break. And then it'll get us all, you and me, too."

"I may not be here then," said Oren.

"A year it took Cram to build the dam," said Perkins, "for we tried to stop him all we could. No Doom Valer would work for him. We waylaid his stuff, and we busted his machinery, and we poisoned his mules. And we got him at last, but he had built the dam. He was a dangerous man. Now the dam's lasted almost another year. But it'll break. Listen! Do you hear anything?"

Oren bent his head.

"I hear a man walking down the street," he said.

A figure came into view, though Perkins heard no footsteps. Past Perkins Inn, keeping close to shadows, slipped Nebulus Cairnstone with cautious haste. His rubber-soled, tight shoes made no sound at all. But Oren had said he heard him. Nebulus did not look up at the veranda as he hurried by.

"Who was that!"

Perkins squinted into the darkness, which had now hidden Nebulus.

"Why, that was only Nebulus Cairnstone, the undertaker's son. He just came back from the city tonight, I hear. Do you know him, Mr. Oren?"

Getting no answer, but seeing Oren shake his head, Perkins went on.

"Nebulus is worried now, for Cram's broke from the pen."

A steamer filled the night with eery siren. Its leanly pointing searchlight pierced the sky and faded among the mist of stars. Slowly arc-ing, it felt downward till its dim shaft rested on the face of Marc Oren. Oren looked straight at it. The searchlight's beam passed onward and upward, darting again toward the frost of constellations.

Old Perkins stirred. His ribs were chill, his spine cold to its extremities.

"This Cram," said he when the steamer's cry had fainted up the river, "started an affair with Nance Cass while he was working on the dam. Nebulus liked her too, and maybe he was willing to marry her, which was more than she could expect, being the daughter of old Nat Cass. Nat might ha' used her in his business, for she was a good-looking girl. Yes, sir, a swell looker every way. Harold Ferald would have given money for her."

Oren stood up abruptly. His square shoulders cut the pale light from the sky, and greater darkness fell on old Val Perkins.

"I reckon I might as well be going in," said Perkins doubtfully.

"I'd like to hear some more," said Oren.

"Like to meet Nance too, hey?" asked Perkins slyly.

His tongue was on his lips.

"George Wayne told me you was giving her the double-O today. And—say!—wasn't you the fellow who came wandering into her place this afternoon just after Craven and Ferald and the judge had chased her out? Well, she's come back now. She came back with Mr. Drew, the warden. But if she don't watch herself she won't stay long."

Marc Oren had thrust his strong, nervous hands in his coat pockets; beneath the cloth one could see them harden and clench. Val Perkins did not notice Oren's intensity. He rambled and rumbled on, his voice getting thinner and chiller, like the night, lifting like lean mist, shrilling into high, super-audible silence, like the voices of locusts perishing from tree-tops.

"There's plenty of men would like to have Nance," said old Val Perkins in a hard, eager tone. "Yes, sir, plenty in Doom Vale would like to have her even now. But it was this fellow Cram she fell for, and since him she ain't been interested in any other."

Slowly Oren sat down again. His face was twisted up with concentrated passion and thought. So dreadful was his twisted face, so intense the stare he directed toward Perkins, that the old hotel-keeper lost the thread of his thought. He began to stammer:

"Well! Kah! As I was saying——"

"Miss Cass took a liking to this dam-builder," Oren prompted slowly.

"Yes, sir," said Perkins. "And because of her and him, but most especially because of the dam he built, we was all a-laying for that son-of-a-gun. Kah! Uh! Well——"

"Go on," suggested Oren.

"Well, one night young Nebulus Cairnstone, he caught her and Cram out on the road by Shadow Pond. Lost Man's Lane, they call that road. It was the night of the day the dam's gates had been closed. A lot of big guns from Albany and New York—governors and congressmen and millionaires and engineers and doctors—they'd been having a celebration of the ending of the dam."

Again Val Perkins faltered.

"Young Cairnstone caught Cram," Oren prompted.

"Yes, sir. And Nebulus had in his hand an iron bar he'd borrowed from Dan Lyons' hardware store, for Nebulus had figured he was going to catch Cram. Nebulus snuk up behind 'em, following 'em a long way through the brush beside Lost Man's Lane, dodging behind trees and creeping softer'n a weasel.

"Then Nebulus got his chance when Cram wasn't looking. He crept close, and he lifted up that iron bar, and—*whish!*—he whammed Cram over the head."

Oren didn't say anything, and Perkins thought he was enjoying the story. He rubbed his hands together, and giggled lowly. In the midst of his giggling he cast a slantwise look at Oren. Old Perkins closed his mouth, and the giggle died.

"Go on!" said Oren.

"Yes, sir," said Perkins, feeling cold creep from his ankles to his knees. "Well, Nebulus, he banged Cram good. But it didn't stop that Cram. He rose up with his head all bloody, and he wrastled with Nebulus, and he threw Nebulus to the road. Oh, he was a terrible man, with his scalp laid bare and blood sopping down into his eyes. With his two hands he was going to kill poor Nebulus——"

"Well? Well?" said Oren harshly. "Finish your story. We haven't got all night."

"It's not so late."

"The night is short."

"There's not much more to tell," whimpered old Perkins, feeling the cold creep from his knees up his thighs.

"Go on!"

"Then we all piled on that fellow Cram," muttered Perkins, "for we was all a-watching to see what Nebulus'd do. We got him off, and we pinned him down, though he fought like a catamount with pups. Cram was raving crazy for a while, for Nebulus had whammed him good. When he could sit up we had him up for trial, for attempted murder on Nebulus Cairnstone."

Oren sat without motion.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed suddenly, with ferocious loudness.

Perkins, who had giggled so gaily a moment before, could see nothing funny now. He startled at the sudden sound of laughter. His teeth clattered, for the night was growing colder and later.

"Well, sir," said Perkins, "old Cherry Sloane was marshal then. But he's dead now; and so is old McGudgeon, the drunk, who was on the jury. I was foreman of that jury. And there was Craven, and Cleaves, and Ladd, and Nils Chubb, and Doc Snellerjohn, and Harold Ferald, and old Nigus Cairnstone—and—let's see—there was Rance Perdee and Nat Cass and Dan Lyons. Judge Purly heard the trial. George Wayne was prosecutor. Let's see—how many's that?"

"Fifteen," said Oren after thought. "Fifteen men."

"Fifteen men," Perkins repeated. "I never thought. Now, ain't that like a poem?"

Oren showed his teeth in a grin.

"What like a poem? You Doom Valers?"

"No, fifteen men. There's a pretty poem about that."

"Fifteen men on a dead man's chest," Oren suggested.

Perkins blew on his cold hands.

"Well, those fifteen men was the finest in Doom Vale. But now Cherry Sloane, the old marshal, he's dead. And so is old McGudgeon. Fell down the cellar steps on his head. There's only thirteen of us left who laid down the law to Cram."

"Twelve," said Oren.

"No, thirteen."

"I lost count," said Oren, yawning.

"Well, sir, Judge Purly sent Cram up for twenty years in old Sing Sing. We got rid of him at last. But it was too late. The dam was done."

Oren stood up. He cast one last look at the river and yawned again. His air, however, was anything but sleepy. He seemed to be listening to a noise far away.

"Wait a minute, Mr. Oren! Wait till you hear what we did to Nance Cass for running with the fellow. We took that smart young girl——"

Oren swayed toward Perkins. He shivered with passion.

"You are an old man," he said between his teeth.

"Not sixty-two yet."

"Do you like to sit here and talk about a woman?"

"I could die," said old Valuable Perkins, "telling you some of the things I've heard them say about Nance Cass."

"I don't want to hear them," said Oren, bending above the old man.

"I was only trying to be sociable. They say——"

"I don't want to hear!"

"But they say—" muttered Perkins.

"You old skunk!" whispered Oren furiously.

"Sir?"

"You old toad!"

"What!"

"You old louse!"

"Hey!"

"Get out of here!"

Perkins slid down out of his chair, his knees frozen and paralyzed. On all fours he tried to scamper away, but he could not move. He tottered to his feet and tried to run. A deep word from Oren halted him, halted him as stony still as if it were enchantment. But he kept the width of a chair between himself and Oren.

"I got to be going in," he mumbled.

Oren stood with head lowered, hands clasped behind him. His posture was ominous, his hands threatened.

Down the street with silent steps Nebulus Cairnstone passed again, pursued by very living devils of terror. He hurried more swiftly, more madly than before. He was almost running, his knees slack and bent, with the non-undulating, ground-killing pace of a woodsman. Nebulus was clearly afraid, and often he looked behind him.

Yet nothing followed him but his own

shadow, a wavering black shadow cast by the moon and one single light from Perkins Inn.

"The boy is scared," whispered Perkins in a deathly tone, "for Cram has killed a man and busted free. And Cram is a man dangerous and strong."

Oren unclasped his hands. And when he brought them in front of him there was nothing in them.

"What sort of a man was this Cram?" he asked.

Perkins wrinkled his brow.

"Well now, it's hard to say right off the bat. You see he was mostly at the dam, except the nights he came down to see Nance Cass. There's no man knows his look right well but Nebulus; for when we had him up for trial in court he was all wrapped up in bandages. But Nebulus 'd know him. And so would Nance Cass."

"I suppose she would," said Oren.

"Yes, sir. And I'd know him if I saw him. But I can't describe him."

"How would you know him?"

"Well," said Valuable Perkins, pulling at his chin and speaking thoughtfully, "he had black hair. And maybe a mustache. But it might have been whiskers. You forget——"

"Why should I forget?"

"Any man forgets after so many months. But Cram had black hair and blue or brown eyes," said Perkins. "That I remember."

"Can't you remember any more?" asked Oren, standing close to old Perkins.

"I can't remember," pondered Perkins, looking vaguely up at the lunatical moon. "But I think I'd know him if I saw him."

"You'd know him?"

"Oh, sure I'd know him!"

"How would you know him?"

"I explained all that," said Perkins, a squeak of anger in his voice. "I'd know him by his black hair, which he never had cut. That's how I'd know him."

"How would you know me?" asked Oren, pushing aside the chair which was between himself and old Perkins.

"You? Oh, I'd know you by your bald head," said Perkins. "Yes, and by the scar on it."

"You have a good eye," said Oren.

"Not so bad," said old Perkins. "And a good eye for the women."

He followed Marc Oren inside, and down the corridor toward Oren's room. Perkins shouted as Oren entered through a door.

"Hey!" he shouted in an attempted whisper. "You're in the wrong pew. Your room's next door. That's Warden Drew's room."

Oren withdrew and closed his own door behind him. Valuable Perkins peeked into Drew's room. The warden was half-awake, lying on one elbow.

"What is it?" he asked.

"All right, sir. One of the guests made a mistake."

"I saw a man in the doorway," said Drew sleepily. "He looked like some one I know. What time is it?"

"Not midnight yet. You won't be disturbed again."

"All right, all right. Wake me up if anything happens. Who was that gentleman anyway?"

"Mr. Oren," said old Perkins.

"Oren?" yawned Warden Drew. "Oren? I don't know him. Well, wake me up if anything happens."

"Oh, nothing will happen, sir."

Drew fell back in bed.

"I had a hunch, a hunch," he muttered, dropping into a doze. "Well—well——"

"Been a hard day, I reckon," said Val Perkins, strangely unwilling to leave and go out again to the solitary darkness of the corridor. "Well, deep dreams!"

"Good night."

FIVE men sitting in Dan Lyons' hardware store about the dying stove, and, holding hard to the telephone, Nibbick Craven heard old Bub Ladd utter his last cry. The small voice of old Bub Ladd did not come again.

Oh, if he had seen what old Bub Ladd saw, as he heard what old Bub Ladd cried, what terror would have come to Nibbick Craven!

A man breathes thirty times in the minute, his pulse beats seventy times, he can speak a hundred words or walk a hundred and twenty steps. But the five men watching Nibbick Craven—Dan Lyons and Juge Purly, Snellerjohn, Cass and Rance Perdee—did not move a step, nor did they speak, nor could they feel their pulses beat nor their breath stir.

Nothing had been said, no word spoken. The small voice of old Bub Ladd had perished out, died out in midst of that last broken screaming. And, *click!* That was all.

But each one of those five men thought the same thing. And Nibbick Craven thought the same thing. They thought of those warning letters they had read in the morning, and each man knew that the Fool Killer was among them now. Though they could not see him, though they could not hear him, each man knew the Fool Killer was in the night as the wind was in the night.

"Follow me!" shouted Nibbick Craven in tones loud as his lungs could form.

But his voice sounded like a frog's croak.

Out of the door ran Craven and Nathan Cass and Perdee and Purly and Lyons and Snellerjohn. They ran shouting down the street. Up the street, and across it, lay Perkins Inn. But they ran down the street. And as they ran other men joined them.

Nebulus Cairnstone and old Nigus Cairnstone, Dumb Nick and Chubb and Noel Cleaves and George W. Wayne came hurrying down side streets, or pushing out of doors which they neglected to lock behind them. Half-naked and half-clad, little Willie McGudgeon tore from an alleyway with a whoop, and incredibly swiftly his gang of unbaked young hoodlums followed him. At the heels of all and sometimes leading them with long bounds pranced Cairnstone's old black mastiff dog, the black dog Night.

Loudly they shouted, afraid to the death. They kept togther, in a compact, hurrying rabble. Young Nils Chubb, the swift and strong, ran no more rapidly than puffing old Judge Purly, and old Judge Purly ran no more slowly than young Chubb. Windows were slammed up at the noisy tumult of their approach, doors banged open and heads peered forth. Pale shouts withered like smoke in the cold wind.

"What's happened? Is the river rising? Oh my God! Is the dam broken?"

"Somebody's done for old Bub Ladd!"

"Done what?"

"Enough!"

"Who? Who is it?"

Dumb Nick, galloping unevenly on his dachshund legs, screamed in loud gulps of sound:

"The Fool Killer! The Fool Killer! He's got the old fool now!"

"Shut your jaws, you devil idiot!" screamed Craven, striking out with his fist at the back of Nick's neck.

But continually as he struck and ran, Nick ran ahead of him; so Craven's brutal, angry fist always just missed the dwarf.

Hoarse, hoarse the old dog Night began to bark.

"Count it! Count!" gasped Nigus Cairnstone to his son. "How many times?"

In slavering threnodies the mastiff hound uttered his sorrow to the stars. With each loud roar he leaped on high, as if he would snatch down one of those high stars and bite it in his teeth.

"How many times? Count, Nebulus!"

Nebulus, who knew what superstition was attached to the black dog's barking, groaned as he stumbled on a stone.

"I make it twelve, father."

"Not thirteen?"

"Not thirteen," gasped Nebulus, his face a chalky clay. "Only twelve."

"You're right, boy," panted old Nigus Cairnstone. "It was only twelve."

The door of the little house up near the railroad depot where Bub Ladd lived his solitary old bachelor life was open. Light streamed from it, the sickly, carrion light or bare-gas jets. It gave forth a disastrous glow, cold and evil. The door creaked with the wind.

Craven and Cass and Nebulus were first who burst in.

Upon the wall the telephone receiver hung from its hook, like a monstrous black plummet exploring tenuous and airy improbabilities, or like a pendulum stilled, which by its stillness marks the death of time.

On the floor lay ashes of a sheet of paper, burned to dust. Nebulus Cairnstone reached quickly for it, but it fell apart in his hand. Craven thought he saw some picture printed on the ash, but it was dust upon the floor.

And so they found old Bub Ladd, who had once been young and gay, the cleverest boy in Doom Vale. What startlement in those pale, popping eyes! They almost spoke. They were huge with deathly visions.

A piece of rope from Dan Lyons' hardware shop had strangled him about the neck. Tight, tight was the knot knotted which strangled him about the neck.

NOW men, pale and silent, filled that little room. Their shadows were everywhere.. The room was thick with shadows. And the men themselves who silently met and touched and

mingled seemed no more than shadows. Fear crept on them like a mist, and out through the door they heard the midnight wind crying.

Tall Harold Ferald came drooping in on the heels of the first frightened mob. No one had seen him before, but now all were glad to see him. He was the rich man and the educated man, and consequently Doom Vale looked to him. Even Nibbick Craven, who was surlily conscious of his own self-reliance and pugnacious in defense of it, looked to Ferald to say or do something which would make everything right again.

But Harold Ferald could do nothing.

"Dead?" he whispered.

"Yes," Craven whispered.

"Strangled?" he whispered.

"Yes," Craven whispered.

"Murder?" he whispered.

"Yes," Craven whispered.

"It looks like that, all right," said Ferald stupidly.

And those words of nonsense were as great sense as he could bring to unraveling the knotted mystery of old Bub Ladd's fate.

Who had done for old Bub Ladd? He had been a fool, but he had never harmed a man. Even his kicks on Dumb Nick had been intended but to lame, not cripple.

Nebulus grasped his father by the arm, and the old man writhed, for the hand of Nebulus was strong. Craven was speaking.

"No sense in waking up the warden and his gang. Let them sleep—they think there's nothing they don't know. Quick, boys! We'll hunt him down. We'll have Nero Cram by morning."

Nebulus grasped harder on old Cairnstone's arm, till the old man's sinewy bones were bruised.

"Cram will get me!" said Nebulus in a desperate attempt at laughter. "You may get him, but first he'll get me. It'll be him that gets me!"

"Who's going out with me?" shouted Craven.

No man stirred. No man even lifted his eyes.

"I'm not going out alone," said Craven. "If you don't like that, you can find another marshal."

"Maybe we better wake up Warden Drew and his men," muttered Nathan Cass.

The idiot Nick screamed. With nervous starts men turned to him. His pale, blank eyes dripped tears of fear.

"There!" he howled.

"There what, you fool?" Craven asked hoarsely.

"His ghost!" moaned Nick. "Old Bub Ladd's ghost! I saw it go by the window!"

Old Nigus Cairnstone, the undertaker and second-hand man, less afraid of ghosts than any man, peered forth into the darkness. It was only a newspaper, blown along by the night wind.

But the terror of Dumb Nick had fastened on other men. There they saw old Bub Ladd lying, but what they saw lying was not old Bub Ladd. Where was he now? Where, where was It now, the thing which had been old Bub Ladd? Oh, the wind muttered, and the bare gas flame flared and flickered in a blast from the opened door.

Up into dusty corners they looked, and out of the windows where the darkness was black, terribly afraid of the fragile wraith of old Bub Ladd, as if he who had been while living so vain and foolish and feeble might work some malefaction, some unimaginable torture on them now.

Had they seen him now, though he did not touch them, though he were no thicker than mist, though he neither spoke nor glared at them—had they seen the shadow of old Bub Ladd now they would have all gone mad. They half-imagined they did see him, the ghosty shadow of him as he had been even that morning, trudging toward them with a bag beneath his arm, treading dim worms, leering at each with glances of fatality, handing to them doomed warnings they dare not and could not refuse, with a dragon-fly flame-eyed from hell sitting on his shoulder.

Each man thought—intensely and terribly he thought till sweat was on the pockets beneath his eyes—of the warning of the Fool Killer; for Nibbick Craven, searching the pockets of old Bub Ladd, found a crumpled typewritten letter; and before he folded it away many men read words on it—

You had better watch out for me from now on——

"Listen, Mr. Ferald," said Nibbick Craven, wiping his lips, though they were hot and dry. "We got to do something, and got to do it quick. This here is a plot."

Ferald did not answer him; but poor Dumb Nick, standing uncertainly near the

door, heard; and in his cobwebbed brain some fantastic word-connection flashed.

"One plot of ground for old Bub Ladd!" he sang.

"—— the idiot! Kill him! Get him out of here!" roared Craven.

Dumb Nick fled before angry hands could reach him. They closed the door on him, shouting curses and epithets. Yet he was no crazier than many a sane man in Doom Vale.

Sighing deeply, in his shrill voice old Judge Purly spoke:

"What has happened?" he said. "Let us rest in no uncertainty. Why don't we do something about it? The case is clear—the postman here has been murdered."

Before the oracularity of high judicial opinion the frightened men kept still. But some of them had temerity to think that they knew as much as Judge Purly, for all his legal learning. Old Nigus Cairnstone alone lingered in no uncertainty. He went forward with his business, swift, deft, soft as a cat.

They heard the wind outside the door, the sound of wind going by with a great and dolorous crying. They were afraid of the dead man, and afraid of the wind, and of that demon Killer who roamed free within the crying wind.

Harold Ferald had gone up to the telephone. He looked at the transmitter. Nibbick Craven bent with him, and saw on the black rubber mouth-piece faint marks, gray circular tracings.

"See here," said Ferald with hoarse triumph, "as plain as day the prints of a sweaty hand!"

"Bub's hand," said Craven.

"Too big," said Ferald. "Too big a hand. Why, I've taken prints of every one in this town, man or woman, and I know something about it. Here, this is the mark of the big hand of the Killer as he put it there to stop old Ladd's screaming."

"What can you tell from that?" asked Nathan Cass.

Ferald snapped his long, hard jaw, and his little eyes twinkled grimly.

"In Sing Sing," he said, "they've got the prints of Nero Cram, and not another man's in the world are like them."

"Not so loud!" cautioned Judge Purly.

Craven grumbled with laughter.

"Catch those finger-prints, Mr. Ferald. Or catch the Killer's shadow. They'll do you no good—no good, I say. I'm telling you right now, telling all you men of Doom Vale, I'd give my shield and commission, I'd give my store and five thousand dollars to boot, to see that Killer swinging high and dry from the limb of a sour-apple tree. That's what I think of all your finger-prints."

"Well, we'll know the Killer is Nero Cram," said Ferald.

"Then what?" asked Craven.

"Why, then we can hunt for him."

"Then what?"

"Then what! Then what! When what?" droned Ferald through his nose. "Why, when we measure up these prints with the prints they've got of Nero Cram in Sing Sing prison, why then—why then we've got him!"

"Put salt upon his tail," said Nibbick Craven. "Tie a bell around his neck! You've got him then? You've got him, have you?"

"Man, man, don't shout so loud," whispered Judge Purly. "This Killer fool may hear you."

Nibbick Craven looked cautiously about him.

"Don't you be afraid," he said, "but what the man who strangled old Bub Ladd hears every word that's spoken."

"You don't mean it!"

Nibbick Craven had his hand at his hip, where his gun was strapped.

"And sees every move we make," he said quietly.

"Where is he? Where is he? Who?"

Craven was watching the window.

"God knows," he muttered. "*I* don't know. But terrible things are a-going to happen. And all of us, every one of us, have got to watch out, and keep awake, and jump, and shoot. That means you, Judge Purly, and you, George Wayne, and you, Dan Lyons; and most of all you, Nebulus Cairnstone. For you're the man he'll want to get!"

No blood was in the face of Nebulus Cairnstone. He walked away, and stood far from the window and the door.

"The man who squeezed and screwed this rope around old Bub Ladd's neck," said the marshal, "he'll get us!"

Nathan Cass fingered the two gold dice on his waistcoat watch-chain. "Are you afraid, Nib?" he asked.

Craven pushed interveners roughly aside and faced the gambler.

"You know I'm not afraid, Nathan Cass, not of man——"

"Nor devil?"

"Not of devil!" Craven shouted.

His tone lowered; he looked around him.

"But I heard," he whispered, "poor Bub Ladd screaming."

Harold Ferald had unscrewed the telephone mouth-piece, touching it only with his handkerchief.

"I'm going to photograph these prints," he said. "Before tomorrow morning I'll know more than I do."

"What will you know?" asked Craven.

"You call on me and find out."

"What are you going to do?" asked Nebulus Cairnstone with shaking shoulders.

Mr. Ferald did not deign to notice the undertaker's son.

Outside they heard the voice of Dumb Nick, who had apparently lingered near the door—

"Somebody's coming!"

Nervous and alert as a wild animal, Nibbick Craven peered out through the door, shouting—

"Who's there?"

He heard the voice of Warden Drew from the night:

"What's happened? What's this I hear?"

"It's Warden Drew from Sing Sing," said Craven. "He'll tell you about those finger-prints, Mr. Ferald."

But Craven did not wait for the warden to come into the house. Swift as a hound, Nebulus Cairnstone darted through Ladd's little lean-to kitchen and out of the back door. His cry blew behind him:

"Outside! Outside!"

Pulling his pistol free, Nibbick Craven leaped after him. In a thick stream other men followed.

"Do you see him?" Craven screamed. "Don't go too far, Nebulus! Where? Where?"

He raised his pistol as he ran, snapping off the safety catch. His pistol roared. Once it was pointed against the stars, but with the second shot he brought it lower.

At what he was shooting Marshal Craven didn't know. But if there was anything in the line of his fire it would not live.

Wayne and Cass had pistols with them. As they drew closer to Nebulus Cairnstone they shot over his shoulders, till the spurts of red flame seemed to singe his ears.

"Do you see him still, Nebulus?" cried Craven.

"Not now," said Nebulus.

He faltered and dropped to the cold ground. He kneeled on his hands, his head hanging like a dog's.

"Didn't wing you, did we, Nebulus?"

"No, no," whispered Nebulus. "Let's go on, go on!"

"That's the stuff, boy," said Craven, clapping him on the shoulder and feeling more respect for Nebulus than he had supposed possible. "We won't let him get our goat. After him, boys!"

But which way they should go after him was an uncertain matter. They looked about them. Cass counseled one direction, and Snellerjohn another. Some men pointed the way they thought the Killer had gone, and some the way they thought he hadn't.

By now they had had a breathing-spell, and the heat of the hunt was frozen in their bones. They crowded more closely together, staring at empty streets and black patches of unbuilt-up land and the shadowy immensity of trees. Now they did not run, but walked. Those who had pistols kept them pointed in their hands. Unarmed men walked behind, but close.

And as they went, loudly searching the night, the Fool Killer, though he was in terror of them, began to laugh. He laughed and laughed inside himself as they searched vainly all through the darkness, and his laughter was without sound.

Beneath the single light which streamed from Perkins Inn they saw Harold Ferald standing. He held something wrapped in a handkerchief carefully before him. As the posse came shambling up he spoke in a loud whisper.

"Drew's men are out; there're three of them, and Drew. They've gone down to the river. They think the Killer will try to swim. I've got that telephone transmitter. I'm going to put those prints in black and white."

Craven and Cass and Nebulus Cairnstone walked with him to his home, the large white wooden mansion of the Feralds, the biggest house in Doom Vale. At the door they would have gone in, for Ferald was known to keep good liquor. But he waved them back.

"Thanks, men. You'll hear from me in the morning."

"I'll see you then," said Craven.

Nebulus Cairnstone had his too-small hat in his hands; for in spite of his sojourn in the great city, the Feralds were still the rich and great men of his world.

"Do you want me to help you?" he whispered. "I'd like to help you."

Ferald stared at him with scorn; he never had liked Nebulus, and considered him as dirt, though he and the undertaker's son had once been rivals in pursuit of Nancy Cass.

"We can stay and keep a watch on you, Mr. Ferald," suggested Craven.

Harold Ferald looked at the iron bars on the doors of his big white house, and thought of the curved iron bars which guarded the windows. He thought of his servants, big men picked for their strength, and loyal to him.

"I'm not afraid of Cram," he said. "If he comes tackling me I won't need to yell for help, like young Cairnstone did once."

Still Craven insisted.

"We can sit around," he said, "and maybe smoke a cigar, and maybe take a drink. It wouldn't be no trouble."

Harold Ferald hesitated.

"See you in the morning," he said. "And I'll have the finger-prints of the Killer."

Shaking his head, he went in. The door closed behind him. Did Ferald close it tight enough? Did its latch fail to snap?

"He'll spend all night," said Craven with an uneasy laugh, "going through those files of prints he has. I remember he took mine once. But then what good'll it do him? We haven't got the Killer."

Abruptly he brought forth his pistol, and leveled it ahead of him at a stirring of bushes on the Ferald lawn. The trigger clicked; the magazine was empty. Cautiously, their steps dragging, Nebulus and Cass and he crept toward the bushes. A sleeping dog got up and galloped away.

The three men did not separate till they were back in the center of the town.

As for Harold Ferald, he sat down alone in his big study and put the telephone receiver on his desk. With a magnifying-glass he studied it after he had dusted the prints to make them clear. Whorls and loops and spirals, and a scar across the pad of one thumb.

Ferald thought he had in his files the print of a thumb with such a ragged scar. He opened the drawers of his desk, and began to go through his files.

In the red-brick fireplace a crimson pile of embers slumbered on lion-faced andirons. Above the fireplace mantel was a mirror, reflecting all the room to its ultimate shadows.

A window-curtain stirred; a loose floor-board squeaked. But Harold Ferald was lost in terrified astonishment as he compared the imprint of those fingers which had strangled old Bub Ladd with a card in his files. He did not see the window curtain stirring, nor hear the loose floor-board squeak and creak.

HAROLD FERALD, the rich man and the educated man, sits by his own hearthfire. His forehead is bent toward the flame, but there is no warmth in it. Witches writhe with hissing cries, stretching out their gnarled yellow arms. In the inmost center of the glowing embers hide devils with malevolent purple eyes.

The yellow arms twine; the eyes wink; the embers burst and fall apart. Smirk at those purple eyes, Ferald; clasp those withering arms. They are hot as love, as joy, and steady as life.

Harold Ferald is intent on those damning, dooming finger-prints. His thin, hard lips mumble, mouthing astonishment and a pale terror in unheard exclamations which are no more than puffy dandelion weed on the wind.

"I'm ——ed! It can't be! Well——"

Above the hearthfire, on the mantel, lies the wide mirror, gray-seeming in the incomplete light. Not like the eyes of men, it shows truly the reflection of life without distortion or evasion, without magnification or obliteration, but with a weary glaciality. Such weary glaciality comes too over the eyes of men who have seen life truly—old priests, old judges, old slaves and young poets.

Harold Ferald, the rich man of Doom Vale, cries out a loud oath. He bangs his fist. As he straightens up in his chair his eyes rise to the mirror.

A shadow, a shape in the gray mirror! The eyes of Ferald are transfixed. His jaws have hardened as if with frost, and he is too paralyzed with fear even to cry.

Cry now, Ferald! Scream for your strong servants! Fight, fight with all your strength, with every thew, for the strangler's rope is looped about your neck!

The bustling embers burn down to ashes, with snarling and growling like lean dogs. The red witches have disappeared. The staring demon eyes have flickered out, gone into black, sunk down to hell.

Up, up, up in smoke the withering witches have fled, through the sucking chimney flue and forth into the black night, silently laughing. Their laughter drifts above Doom Vale, and is more silent than the murmurs of the Hudson. The wind catches flaky cinders of ash and bears them far, whirling them softly through the sable air.

Ashes fall on Nat Cass's Red House; they fall on Dan Lyons' hardware store, in the upper story of which Nancy Cass must be sleeping. They fall on Perkins Inn, where no light is lighted. They blow to the river and the hills.

In this manner your gray ashes will be cast abroad, Doom Vale, when your appointed time has come.

The little fire has burned to ash. Little minutes run down to oblivion. A little mouse scurries on the floor. Now who will strike the fire again; and who will wind the clock again; and who will set the sharp steel trap to crack that rodent's throat?

Tick, tick, tick! Is it the clock beneath the mirror on the mantel, or the frightened mouse on the floor, or the dried rattle of laughter in the Killer's throat?

The fire is dead. The clock is stopped. The mouse runs off with gibbering squeaks, and there is rattling in the wainscoting. Some one is crazily laughing. No, the laughter is silent.

And at that dreadful hour of midnight in his tumble-down house on the other side of Doom Vale, far from the big house of the Feralds, old Nigus Cairnstone lay shivering beneath his bedclothes. He heard a loose shutter rattle. *Clap! Clappety-clap!* it rattled. *Clap! Clappety-clap!*

The black dog Night was howling. Listen! How many roars?

Eleven times the black dog belled. Old Nigus Cairnstone listened. Eleven times it was, no more that the black dog belled his dirge.

Old Cairnstone could stand it no more. He crept from bed, and like a burning demon in his red underwear—he wore no night clothes—shuffled to the door of his son's room.

"O Nebulus! O Nebulus!"

He rapped:

Tap! Tap!

Clap! Clappety-clap! the shutter banged.

"Did you hear that dog, Nebulus?"

But Nebulus was sleeping deep on his first night in the old home town. He did not answer with word or oath; he did not even moan.

"Nebulus! Are you asleep, Nebulus?"

Old Cairnstone listened, and he heard no answer.

How horrible is the night!

The shutter had changed its tune under impulse of some veering gale. *Clappety-clappety-clappety!* it banged. *Clappety-clappety-clap!*

IT WAS after midnight that Marc Oren lay quiet and still in his bed, but not asleep. He lay perfectly rigid, listening to each small sound. He had been trying to doze, but he was now clear and wide awake.

Below-stairs, in the hotel office, a typewriter had been clicking. Wind was rising. All was quiet over Doom Vale, till far away he heard a man shouting; then that shouting abruptly silenced. And the loud quiet came again.

Warden Drew and his men had not returned to Perkins Inn. Oren knew that they were searching along the Hudson's shore for trace of the Killer. And he had heard them swear by all black gods that they'd not sleep till they had that murderer, that dog, with iron bracelets on his wrists. They would hunt the night under, they would harry the sun up, looking for the Killer who roamed free within that terrible night.

Marc Oren opened his eyes, staring at the blackness till its component molecules took shape and were visible, swimming past with the largeness and the luminosity of the eyes of deep-sea fishes. Millions, decillions of molecules filled all space, crowding each other solid as a mosaic, yet with the yielding of gelatin grains of tapioca pudding. A mosaic, a pudding of luminous fish eyes on the ocean of black; all the world was filled with matter; Oren's head felt oppressed to bursting with the heaviness of those multitudinous molecules of air.

The scar across his head began to throb. He turned in bed and groaned.

Oren closed his eyes so tight that on the lining of their lids he imagined he beheld the veined blood. Those veins took form as an

oval and shaped into a face. What face was this, so intensely painted on the lids of his eyes? Lying motionless as a paralytic in the heavy dark, his eyes shut so tight they pained, Marc Oren saw the face of Nancy Cass grow vividly, till it was like a living presence, burning with the intensity of life.

He looked at that face, and it dissolved into nothingness again. But the eyes lingered longest, those dark-brown eyes which hid such passions of love and fidelity. Her mother's Spanish blood was in those eyes, and the anger of Nathan Cass, who though he had fallen low was still a fighting-man.

To take a look into Marc Oren's thoughts, to lay them bare, would not disclose much.

"The square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the complement of the right angle," he thought. "For since——"

Then his thought broke off, and he tried again.

"The angles of the base of a right-angled triangle are equal to the sum of the angles less any other angle," he pondered; but knew that was not right.

"The angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal to the sectors they subtend."

So on and on in a maze of forgotten Euclidian nonsense till he had reverted to his original proposition and stated it right and proved it mathematically.

"The square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the squares of the other two sides," he thought carefully. "For——"

And when he had proved it right to the last Q. E. D. he settled down with a sigh as if he had accomplished something almightily important. His rigid limbs relaxed. His eyes grew thick. And the great gray ghosts of dreams came on him.

What the hour was he didn't know when he awoke. Clear as a shout, he heard a voice calling him and felt a light touch over his face. But no one was in the room. The door was locked. The squeaky window had not been opened.

He was wide awake. He fumbled for his watch and stared at its luminous dial. It was four of the morning. He lifted himself on elbow.

No sound. Perhaps a dog had barked.

But as clearly as if demons were screaming in his ears he could hear in the silences his name repeated in tones inaudible:

"Marc Oren! Marc Oren! Wake up, Marc Oren! Wake—wake—wake!"

He leaped from sleep, sitting on the edge of his bed. Quite well he knew no human voice had actually called, and he thought it was a delusion of insanity. It could have been a clock, that voice, or the barking of a dog. Ticking, he heard a hall clock shattering the blackness with vibrations of tinny sound.

"Marc Oren! Wake up, Marc Oren! Wake—wake—wake!"

In the night that voice unmistakable and inaudible was crying to him. He was not afraid. He was a man who had never been afraid of anything. Was that cry but a delusion of madness? If it were not the voice of his own proper angel, it was the voice of his own demon.

Soft was the silence beyond his door. He dressed swiftly in the dark. He listened to the door. Absolutely without sound, he crept toward it. Still the voice shrilled through the emptiness of the solitary night:

"Beware, Marc Oren! Wake and beware!"

In a flash he saw again the face of Nancy Cass, and thought it was twisted with a fiendish fear.

He turned the key softly, swinging the door wide. The corridor was empty. There was no niche where any one could have hidden.

Soft and quick and determinedly, Marc Oren slipped down the hall and down the stairs. In the office below, near to a stove which was cold and dead, Dumb Nick slept on a settee. One side of his face was marked with the settee bars, Oren could see in the dimmed light of a single glare behind the hotel desk. The idiot did not awake.

Oren heard a creaking board above him as he slipped through the outer door into the night, and thought it was old Valuable Perkins up and prowling. But he did not know whether old Perkins had seen him.

No, no one had seen him. And there was no one on Black Street to see him. He hurried down it, whipped by the cold, instinctively seeking the shadows. He was opposite Dan Lyons' hardware store.

For a moment he stood close by a tree, merging into its shadow, looking at the window of Nance Cass and at the stairs which led to her room. As a cloud crossed

the sky he hurried over and crept up the stairs.

No sound. He held his breath. Every sinew was taut. By blind instinct he stepped over stairs which might have creaked. He knew the woodsman's ways. Up, up he crept, inch by inch, pressing softly against the wall.

A sound of metal above at Nancy Cass' door. A faint sound. Why, a rat in the trap would make more sound. A rat would bang and slam its trap about.

The sound ceased, and all was deathly still.

Oren held his breath and was conscious of the hushed breath of another presence. He waited. Now he could hold his breath no longer, and the gruesome air was stirred by the breathing of two persons, of two animals conscious of each other, of two beasts knowing this was an hour of death.

With a grunt and a sudden leap Marc Oren took the last few stairs. The black was riven by a horrible scream. Horrible as devils deep in the pit was that inhuman cry.

"I've got you!" shouted Marc Oren madly.

His hands clutched at clothing. Something sinuous and rough passed over his face. Long afterward he reasoned out that it had been a rope.

With another fiendish howl the unknown tore past him, leaping headlong, with flying arms, down the stairs. There was a horrible banging below as if tin tomtoms were being smashed furiously. *Bang! Bang! Bang!* Another cry. And silence.

Oren leaped down swift as he could. His ankle turned and he fell to the bottom of the stairs. He stared forth at Black Street. No one moved on it.

Slowly the black maple-trees swayed, creaking in the steady Winter wind from the north. The faces of shops stared blackly all up and down Black Street, with their show windows like huge bottomless maws, like the mouths of waiting crocodiles.

Which way, which way? Which way had the demon screamer gone? Oh, the wind could not answer, though it blew heavily about Marc Oren's ears; for the wind had not seen the Killer go.

Oren pounded on the door of the hardware shop. Old Lyons slept in a cubby-hole at the shop's rear. He must have heard those howls above him. He must have heard that terrible banging like tomtoms being broken. But his door was locked. Absolute silence stalked up and down behind it.

Marc Oren thought he heard a creaking step in answer to his pounding, a hushed and secret watching. But he listened long and hammered again, and a third time, and the sound was not repeated.

Afar a dog began to bark. The black mastiff Night had risen from his crazy dreams, and he was yammering. Listen to those dismal dirges! Count them, each one clear and sharp, pealing off to throbbing silence. Marc Oren could not help but hear. Ten times, ten times, only ten times now the mad dog barked. And when its barking was done it made no other sound.

Cold settled in Oren's sprained ankle, and one foot went numb under him. Up and down in front of the stairs leading to Nancy Cass' room he paced, his naked head uncovered. Up and down he limped, listening, watching, cunningly alert. He thought—and thinking so consoled him—that the girl was peering at him from above.

But she said nothing, did not whisper or call. Perhaps she was senseless with the terror of that night. And Marc Oren could not shout to her, for he himself did not know that he, Marc Oren, was Nero Cram.

The sky beyond the Hudson paled with gray. The air was frosty now, with the sharp bitterness of the pre-dawn. When the gray light had suffused all the sky, and Oren saw far down the street a man with a lunch-pail lounging to his work, the first laborer in the Ferald Mills, Oren turned slowly up the street.

With many backward glances he hobbled to Perkins Inn, where the idiot Nick still slept, or again slept, and where Warden Drew and his weary men were waiting.

DOOM VALE, as you have seen, lies between the Hudson and the Shadow. Because of that the fear of drowning is a continual, never forgotten menace. The story of the horrible flood which wiped away part of old Doom Vale is the first story children hear. The Hudson may change its course, the hills be leveled to the sea, and that fear will never die.

The town built on the ashes of Pompeii has lived in terror of volcano for two thousand years. In the high Alps is a village where children are yet frightened if you speak of avalanche, and old men tell how a squadron of great Hannibal's host was here

smothered beneath avalanche, smothered and rolled down bottomless crevasses, elephant and horse and man; there has never been an avalanche since but men remember Hannibal. Likewise the remembrance of drowned Atlantis is a terror to all proud cities by the sea. Doom Vale remembers its one flood, which drowned eight families in a night.

Given the natural distrust of that little, ignorant, shut-in Doom Vale to all strangers, and you can understand the great hate it had for Nero Cram, who in his duty as State engineer built the great reservoir dam at Shadow Pond. It was like a pistol pointed at Doom Vale's face, or a knife pressed to its throat.

And if you had known Nancy Cass, you would have understood that hate against Cram even better. Doom Vale regarded her as its own property. What was she but the daughter of the gambler, of the owner of the Red House?

All her girlhood Doom Vale had watched her grow, watched her ripen in womanhood and deepen in marvelous beauty, and it had wanted her, and thought she was its own. For she was only the gambler's daughter, and Nebulus, the undertaker's son, had been thought crazy when he offered to marry her.

Doom Vale felt it owned Nancy Cass. Even that unlovely town could lust for such unequaled loveliness. What right had she to say who should and should not have her? And then came Cram.

You can understand now why Doom Vale men fought Nero Cram in every secret, dirty way they could while he was building the dam. They spiked his machinery, they burned his camps, they poisoned his mules. They would have shot him too; but his men had been picked ex-Army men, loyal and able to shoot in turn. Only when the dam was built, and his force disintegrated, did Doom Vale get its chance.

And with Cram out of the way by due process of law as administered by Judge Purly's court the hate of Doom Vale had fallen on Nancy Cass. One night at midnight a mob came to Nat Cass's house, Cass being away, and got her. With lusting hands they tore her clothing from her and tied her to a maple-tree on Black Street.

It's said old Nigus Cairnstone led the mob, but it may have been Harold Ferald. Nathan Cass cut her free; but he would not let her come back to him. And the cruel men of Doom Vale would not let her get away.

For its sins, for its crimes unimaginable, for its cruelty surpassing the cruelty of beasts, Doom Vale lives in everlasting fear of drowning. But God has set His bow in the clouds, and His hand against the waters, and His heel on Doom Vale. The fire in the bow in the clouds is a warning, terrible and bright—Doom Vale will fall by fire.

Yet there came that time of the dismal nights when it seemed all Doom Vale would perish by the rope. Strangling rope! Beware! The Fool Killer was in town.

The rocky hills are stern and brave which strike upward and butt the cold west sky; and the river Hudson is lovely, though blacker than Cleopatra. Many other beauties, tremendous and titanic, are about Doom Vale; but Doom Vale does not see them. And other things the town does not see, or the Fool Killer would not have lived so long.

Fog in Doom Vale, and rain and Winter wind from the notches of the hills, and rain again, and then the fierce Summer sun cracking the sod on lawns till great hell yawns. Shadow Stream is a sheet of sleet in January, in July a black trickle creeping through beds of ooze upon whose brown fissures arid water-spiders drag their withered, woolly legs. In January Shadow Pond is also a sheet of sleet, but in July it is a black water, a hundred feet deep in its submerged valleys. Cold and heat, since the dam was built a year had gone by.

But mud or ice, sleet or heat on the Shadow, forever there is the wide Hudson. Sometimes the river is brown, or red in the dawn, or dun or green or blue, or suffusing in the sunset's coals, with a hundred colors humming in its downward tides. And many and many a midnight hour when Cram had sat beside it with Nancy Cass the river had been deep black, not mirroring stars. Then it was, at midnight, it seemed to remember its many drowned.

The river murmurs of deep flood, of cataclysm surpassing belief. Shadow Pond is an eternal threat of deep drowning from the hills. But the promise has been given. By the burning bow in the clouds, it is not flood but fire which shall consume Doom Vale.

Rain and sun and flower and shadow. Now near a year since Cherry Sloane, the old marshal, led Nero Cram away.

Little devils in the rain, little specks across the sun, little bees within the flower, little whispers in the shadow. Who knows where Nero Cram is now?

Shadow and sun and flower and rain. So the year has made haste, since that dreadful evening when Nebulus stalked Cram through the woods and tried to kill him with an iron bar.

Great fire within the sun, great death within the shadow, great immortality within the flower, great unforgetting in the rain. How much would Doom Vale give, of its money or its blood, if Nebulus had never been induced to strike that murdering blow?

Through the long years the waters, waters of the Hudson and the Shadow, ripple and slaver and creep and weep. Through the long year lights burn in dawns and sunsets, painting on high heaven lofty towers of doom. Red fire in the sky! It is a warning, Doom Vale.

But more terrible than the old memory of floods or the signs of fire in the sky is the fear of that unseen man who kills with the strangler's rope in the night! Be dreadfully afraid of him, Doom Vale!-

Look to the grounding of your lightning wires, you cruel men of Doom Vale. Peer beneath the bed. Have a rabbit's foot beneath your pillow before you lie down of night. Say your prayers, read the Book, and know your accounts are cast and finished. Drift into sleep. For you a dream. The dream grows mad. The hour has come, the hour of the Killer has come, fool!

Yes, nail the broken window-latch and wire the rusty chain across the door. Keep all lights burning through the night. Set your dead-falls and traps and alarms. Let the growling dogs be loosed. You will hear them bay at midnight's dreadful hour. And louder will you hear their silence.

A rustle, and the window-latch is lifted up. A snap, and the strong chain across the door is broken clean. You will hear a creak upon the stairs. You will hear a little breathless patter like the rain. You will hear a faint rustling no louder than when grass is stirred. You will hear——

The silence of immortality!

Hush! Oh, calm that rattling heart! Shout out, fire forth or crawl beneath the bed-clothes. Your ear-drums will scream with the silence; they will pound and burn and ring. You will hear the hinges of your inmost door softly, softly begin to turn.

The Killer, the Killer is coming!

Watch! Watch! Watch! The Fool Killer will get you!

AS MARC OREN came back to the hotel from the hardware store, diagonally across the street, he met that first man going to the mills. It was Nils Chubb, the red-cheeked boy. Nils touched the brim of his hat.

"Fine frosty morning," he said. "You're up early, Mr. Oren."

Oren nodded. A step or two farther on he passed the door of Craven's butcher shop. The butcher-marshal, red-eyed and with his face seamed three shades of pink, was opening the front door. He was dressed in crumpled blue-serge pants and denim shirt in which he had probably caught a few moments of sleep. Craven had seen Oren coming from the direction of Nancy Cass', and his glances were sullen with fury.

As Oren passed Craven stretched his bull neck and spat in Oren's path. Oren glanced at him sharply. Craven glowered sullenly, but his eyes fell away from Oren's face. In all Craven's slovenly appearance Oren noticed as a peculiarly odious thing that he had, instead of belt, his pants fastened about his waist with a length of frayed rope.

"Your name's Craven, isn't it?" asked Oren, stopping with sudden curiosity and looking hard at Craven.

The marshal glanced uneasily away.

"Yes, sir," he said. "What about it?"

Oren did not answer. He walked on, and into the door of Perkins Inn.

In the hotel office Warden Drew and his exhausted men were gathered about a table, sprawling in utter fatigue. They were examining something. Dumb Nick was no longer asleep. He was building a fire in the wood-burning base-burner; with his arms piled high with cordwood, higher than his head, and his short legs balanced strongly underneath him, he looked like a dwarf or troll who had just come out of some smoky mountain.

He dumped the wood at the foot of the stove as Oren passed by the office door. Some splinter had scratched his temples and cheek with a long bloody line.

The crash of the falling cordwood, rattling down on the stove's sheet-iron mat, startled the nerve-exhausted officers in the office. But Marc Oren had no nerves. He passed by the door, still limping heavily,

and went up to his room. Soon he was deep asleep.

Warden Drew and his men were closely examining a letter and did not see Oren pass the door. The letter was that typewritten one which old Bub Ladd had given to Perkins the morning before, together with letters to eleven other men and one to himself. Carefully, word by word, Warden Drew was examining it, his glances narrowed and keen:

I've had enough of you, Old Fool. You'd better watch out for me from now on. I'd liefer kill you than spit. I am the Fool Killer.

The message, crazy as it was, had been rendered crazier by assorted gross misspellings. In this letter to Perkins "fool" was written once as "fule" and once as "fuil." With all its uncouth errors literally transcribed it ran:

Iv had anuff of yuo, Old Fule. Yuod better wach out for me from know on. Id leafer kill yuo than Spit. I. M. the Fuil Killer.

Officer 338 handed the letter back to Drew, who had given it him. He put a broad forefinger on it.

"Those are the misspellings of an educated man," he said, nodding strongly.

"That's my guess," said Drew. "How about the signature?"

338 was one of those studious, diligent men who know dabblings of many strange and forgotten sciences, but are not too strong in practicality.

He stared long at that strange, insane ideograph, tracing it again and again with a blunt finger—

"It looks like some Egyptian or Chaldean signature, colonel?" he said doubtfully to Drew. "Don't you think there was a band combined in the killing of the old postmaster? Maybe the Killer belonged to some black night-riding gang in these hills."

"If he did, we'll get that gang," said Drew harshly. "I've telephoned to Monroe for a squad of the State constabulary, and they'll be down by tomorrow at latest. This town marshal either can't or won't help us."

"Maybe he knows more than you think," suggested Officer 97 quietly.

"Do you think it's a gang?" asked 338.

Warden Drew shook his head.

"Killers like that work alone," he said.

"Well, sir," said 338, "I still think this signature is that of some secret order of murderers—like the Indian Thugs, or the Assassins. It might be——"

"Thirteen men got the same letter," broke in Officer 17, "so I understand."

"Well, these horns look like the horns of Apis, the Devil Cow," said 338. "It's crazy, whatever it is."

"And we're crazy, to be sitting here trying to figure it out," said 17 bluntly. "I say—say we'd better be up and out again, and I run this snake to the open. He's hiding up in the hills again, like that girl saw him last night."

Officer 17 yawned, and his eyes half-closed.

"Let's get him!" he said hoarsely, awaking himself from drowsiness. "Let's get him before he hits again."

Drew hardened his lips.

"He won't have chance to hit again. Some place he's lying low over the day, and by tonight he'll try to break for some land farther north. It's Canada he's heading for now."

"I'd like to know why he got the old postman," said 97.

"He won't hit again," said Warden Drew doggedly.

"How about all these letters?"

"I don't know," said Drew.

At that early hour of morning, strangely, while Warden Drew was prophesying that the Killer would not strike again, Ferald's servants were lifting their dead master from the rug before his dead hearthfire. Even at that hour on the door of Dan Lyons' hardware store, diagonally across the street from the hotel, Nathan Cass was rattling and pounding, wondering what in the ——'s name, and what in —— was wrong with Daniel Lyons that he kept so very still.

Drew spread the threatening letter before him, staring and staring.

"I think," he said slowly, "I see—it now! I see it!" he cried. "It's a monogram. Two initials! Look, Johnson! Can't you see it? This signature is two letters run together."

"W?" asked 338 doubtfully.

"N—an N and a C. N. C.—there you are! Well, whoever is the Killer who went to Sing Sing under the name of John Doe, he signs himself N. C.!"

"Maybe it's some kind of symbol anyway," urged 338, "like the initials of a

motto, as, for instance—*'Nescios Cædo.'* That means, 'I kill fools.' "

"Maybe," said Warden Drew impatiently.

He held the paper up to the light, staring at its watermark. He arose and paced back and forth.

"Where's your typewriter?" he demanded abruptly of Dumb Nick, who was jumping about in a flurry of watchful anguish. Drew sat down at the typewriter and rolled a sheet of paper in it. He picked off words:

Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid— Now is the time——

A voice squeaked from beyond the door—

"Leave that there typewriter alone!"

Old Valuable Perkins came shivering and slinking in. When he saw Drew he blinked his eyes and muttered an apology.

"Thought it was that fool Nick," he said. "Well, now; well, now, how things going, mister? I didn't get a wink of sleep last night, I tell you."

Slowly Perkins crept to his station behind the registry counter. He moved slowly and apparently rheumatism had fast hold of his muscles. He groaned and squeaked with each gesture. He slammed the register open, glancing at the entries of the day before—

Marc Oren, Hellburne, Florida; Gabriel Drew, Tom Johnson, Richard Wright, Aaron Beggs, Sing Sing.

Perkins winked his eyes at the morning sun, which rose over the hills beyond the Hudson with small and cold and yellow light. It was twenty-four hours, almost to the hour, since he had stood there and watched Marc Oren striding in.

"Quite a change, quite a change since yesterday," he said, shaking in his knees and through his shoulders. "Roo-oo! Roo-oo!" he shook. "It's cold. And yesterday was hotter'n help."

Warden Drew unrolled what he had written from the typewriter. Closely he compared it with the message of the Fool Killer. Letter for letter he compared it.

"Open up the shades!" old Perkins yelled to Nick. "A little more light, you fool! Clean up them there spittoons!"

"Spittoon yourself," mumbled Nick as he poked at the fire in the base-burner.

"You gentlemen are up early," said old Perkins to the officers. "If you didn't get no more sleep than I did you wouldn't be up so early. I heard that Mr. Oren snoring. How he can snore! He was buzzing all night, and he's buzzing yet. I didn't close my eyes a wink."

Warden Drew touched Perkins on the shoulder. At that firm, stern touch the hotel keeper shook more than before.

"Your hand's cold," he said.

Before his eyes Drew was holding the warning of the Fool Killer.

"Recognize the watermark on this sheet," Drew asked, "this dragon and cross?"

"Why, why—" Perkins stammered, "why, I reckon I just do. That's like on the paper we use in this hotel office."

"And this letter was written on your typewriter," said the warden.

Old Perkins couldn't speak for a moment.

"Why, that can't be. Nobody uses that machine but me and Dumb Nick. Nick! Hey, you fool!"

"Somebody else used it," said Drew.

Valuable Perkins pulled his sharp white mustaches out of joint.

"You're right, mister," he said. "By Jerusalem, you're right! I ought to 'a' known that broken-down old D. Now it's funny a thing like that could get by me, for I'm particularly observing. Yes, sir—it's funny."

"If one man in this town were awake," said Drew quietly, "we'd have the Killer by now. Yes, if just one of you were awake. For he's here! He's around here some place. And some of you have seen him."

"What makes you say that?" whispered Perkins, darting glances around him.

"What man do you know with the initials N. C.?" asked Drew.

"Why—ah—" Perkins stammered.

"A man whose last name is C—C something?"

"Well—" gasped Perkins.

"The man who wrote this signed himself N. C. I suppose you never noticed even that."

"Well, that's funny," said Perkins weakly.

"What's funny?" Drew asked fiercely.

"Well, I couldn't think at first of nobody with those initials. But now I can think of a whole raft of 'em. Why, there's old Cairnstone, and young Cairnstone—and there's Noel Cleaves, the grocer—and—I'll be whanged!—Nibbick Craven."

"That's the name of the marshal?" asked Drew. "I'd forgotten it."

"Yes, sir. He's the one you had a argument with last night in Lyons' store. Why, there's a whole raft of N. C.'s. There's Nat Cass, and—well, there's Nils Chubb—and then there's Nance Cass."

Drew swore.

"Why drag in a woman?"

"Wait a minute! Just hold your horses!" shouted Perkins, more and more excited. "N. C.—N. C., you say? I told you! We all told you!" he screamed, in throes of fury and fright. "It's Nero Cram! It's Nero Cram!"

"I'd like to lay my eyes on this Cram," said Drew, biting his lip. "His name sticks in my mind. Do you know what happened last night to the postman, the old man named Ladd?"

"What happened?" Valuable Perkins whispered.

"You must have been asleep," said Drew watchfully, "for every other man in town was there."

"No, sir," said Perkins weakly. "I didn't sleep a wink. I laid awake all night listening to that Mr. Oren snore. What happened to old Bub Ladd?"

Drew didn't answer him.

"What happened—what happened to Bub?" cried Valuable Perkins, more and more frightened.

"Nothing more than will happen to you if you don't keep yourself awake," said Drew.

AT THE shuttered white mansion of the Feralds vague figures move softly, whisper softly, breathe softly or hold their breath. Old Nigus Cairnstone has taken charge of things, and he creeps about like a hungry cat. With tremendous shadowy swiftness he creeps about, with the tails of his frock coat flapping at his knees. At a turn of his arm you may see beneath his soiled white cuffs a flash of the ribbed red wristlets of his Winter underwear.

Expertly as he moves about he makes a mental survey of the furnishings of the Ferald house. He would like to buy them in at auction. Much of them he could sell again to Nat Cass for use in his Red House; the rest could find a market in Nyack or Tuxedo or Haverstraw.

Into the inside pockets of his full-cut frock coat old Cairnstone thrusts a few odds and ends—an antique brass paper-knife, a silver cigaret-box, a deck of gilt-edged playing-cards and an iron paperweight representing the Woolworth building. Harold Ferald will not miss such trifles. He'll never miss them now.

"Terrible, terrible!" squeaks Judge Purly in an awed, frail voice.

"Yeh, yeh," mutters old Cairnstone.

"Where's Nebulus?"

"Sleeping."

"I guess you'll want him to help you," says Judge Purly.

"He never liked my sort of work," says old Cairnstone with a note of hidden anger. "He always thought he was too good."

"It's a necessary business," says Purly, too scared to know what he's saying.

"Business is good," says old Nigus Cairnstone.

Doc Snellerjohn, who is local coroner, walks round and round the shiny mahogany desk before the hearth, the desk at which Ferald was sitting. Snellerjohn keeps pulling at the lapels of his coat. He has donned his official cutaway at first news of this newest horror. Without that cutaway a man could not decently be pronounced dead.

Rance Perdee, who is a horse-doctor, argues in whispers with Snellerjohn as to whether Harold Ferald died of a strangulation of the esophagus or of a stoppage of the glottis. They argue more angrily and more angrily. Their words meet in mid-air and shatter like bubbles. They wave their arms. They smooth back their hair indignantly. They extend their fists. Snellerjohn rubs his finger around his long red nose and thrusts his finger in Perdee's face.

"How can you strangle the 'glottis?" he whispers.

"With a rope. How can you stop the 'glottis?"

"With a rope," said Snellerjohn.

"I wish somebody'd stop your 'glottis."

Snellerjohn thrusts his finger closer to Perdee's face.

"You know a lot, you horse-doctor."

"All right, you sirup-spiller."

"All right."

"All right. If you stick your finger in my mouth, I'll bite it off."

"I'll bite off your ears!"

"I'll bite off your nose."

The furious medical altercation is broken only when Snellerjohn pauses in front of

the mantel mirror to straighten his red cravat and smirk at his red nose. Snellerjohn sees in the gray glass above the mantel crosstree nothing but himself, nothing whatsoever. The retina of its broad eye retains no image of the dreadful hour of night. Yes, that mirror, Snellerjohn, has seen a sight which would make your own eyes whiten. It saw. *It saw.*

Doc Snellerjohn is not troubled by vague glassy ghosts. The mirror shows him Nathan Cass walking quietly up behind him. Snellerjohn sees Cass as last night Ferald saw the Shape creep up behind his chair. But Nathan Cass is too lifelike, too well-known, to bring a tremor. The mirror, unlike a pond, is not rippled by a stone.

Nat Cass stands at the elbow of Snellerjohn. Ceaselessly, unwearyingly, Rance Perdee repeats that Ferald died of a strangulation of the esophagus. Snellerjohn only shakes his head and mumbles. He does not believe Perdee, he does not minimize the importance to immortal truth of insisting that it was a stoppage of the 'glottis, but his lungs aren't so leathery as those of Rance Perdee.

In and out like a hungry cat moves old Cairnstone. His hands are over all things. They seem to exude a deathly chill, a fungus rot. Now old Cairnstone rubs them dryly, now he spreads them wide, as if smoothing an invisible counterpane of air.

"Business is good," says Nathan Cass, looking with a sudden scowl at the gray old man, whom he hates above all men.

"Couldn't be better," says old Cairnstone.

"Oh, couldn't it?"

The Ferald Mills held holiday that day. It's a poor man dead who doesn't bring some one holiday. A crowd was gathering on the street in front of the Ferald home. No one yet dared to step on the frost-withered lawns of the richest man in town.

Most of the crowd was girls, mill-girls of Polish or Italian birth with flat, dark faces which expressed no emotion. Only one was crying—she, the prettiest, whom Harold Ferald had known. Heavily she turned, pushing her way through the gathering crowd, and stumbled off.

Then the crowd outside began to break in its edges, and drift, and hurry, and run away. From the front windows of the Ferald house Nibbick Craven watched those hurrying people. There was no indication of what terror had come on them. But like withered Autumn leaves they blew down the street, and it was empty.

"Something's happened to old Dan Lyons," was the muttered word which broke that crowd of starers. "There's trouble in Dan Lyons' store."

Drew's men had found it out. Searching from house to house, from store to store for the Killer, they came to Lyons' hardware shop. The front door was locked and doubled-locked. But a side door, opening in from the hallway where stairs led to the second story, was burst open. A pile of garden tools, of washtubs and tin basins, had fallen down in front of the side door.

Within they found old Dan Lyons, clad only in a night shirt. The Killer had done to him as to old Bub Ladd and Harold Ferald.

Valuable Perkins and Dumb Nick followed the prison officers in. Old Perkins grew white over all his face and fell to a chair. But Nick seized a spade, and began busily to try to dig up the wooden floor. What did his idiot brain imagine he was going to plant there?

"Fool, fool," he muttered. "Who's a fool now, Nicholas Duum?"

"Who do you think you are now, you idiot?" cried Perkins madly.

"Old Nigus Cairnstone," said the dwarf. "Graves three for a quarter for a fool. Do you want me to dig one for you?"

ALL day Marc Oren slept, in a sleep which was heavy as a stone and dead as a man beneath a stone. All day long he slept, till came the darkness, not tossing, breathing faintly, in unbelievable weariness. No one disturbed him.

Some terrible dream raced through his mind. At times he groaned, and his relaxed fingers twitched. There were visions of hideous faces, insane and foul, and he dreamed that a giant hammer beat on his head. All through the dismal day the same terrible dream went endlessly, the same hideous faces and the pain, till it seemed something cracked, or broke, or snapped, in his head, and he awoke.

October dusk was drifting in the windows, sad and colorless. Motionless Oren lay, dissolving dreams from actuality, staring up at blotches on the ceiling paper. A curious lightness had come over him with his sudden awakening. He felt that a

ponderous weight had rolled from his eyes. He felt so light he imagined himself lifting and floating toward the discolored light-brown ceiling.

Oren heard the patient ticking of a clock—*click, click, click, click!* The air in his room was heavy and warm; he had not opened the windows nor even removed his clothing when he toppled into bed that morning and sank at once to drowning sleep. His forehead was damp, as were his armpits and his breast.

The last fringes of the terrible dream raveled away. The dream lifted like a curtain; it washed out like fog; and all was clear to him. He sat up.

"I am Nero Cram," he thought. "And I've got work to do!"

Oren—or shall we call him Cram?—found when he tried to lift his right foot that the sprain received on the stairs the night before had swelled his ankle; it was thick and lifeless, and throbbed heavily, all discolored purple and dark yellow and wine red.

Oren hobbled to the window. He pushed aside the starched white curtains. Down the street and across from the hotel he saw men coming and going through the door of the hardware store. Above the store he marked a light from behind drawn blinds. In the moment he watched Warden Drew and two officers emerged from the hardware shop and hurried down the street.

Hobbling carefully down-stairs, Oren found the hotel office below packed with men. They moved about restlessly in the little boxlike room, mumbling in a continual buzz. None ever got far away from the base-burner, at whose dull crimson glow they warmed their open palms.

Oren caught sight, as he paused in the doorway, of gun-stocks protruding from the crooks of some men's arms. Other men had pistols strapped to their thighs. The yellow electric lights were dim, and shone lividly on their faces.

Oren rested his hand on the door-post and surveyed them. With careful, unforgetting gaze he looked from one man to another as they slowly walked about or shifted their chairs. He recognized Valuable Perkins and Noel Cleaves, Cass and Perdee, George W. Wayne, Nibbick Craven, and the idiot Nick.

There were other men of swarthier complexion, workers from the Ferald Mills. Many of these, too, carried guns. Only old Cairnstone and his son Oren didn't see.

Many of these men had been in Dan Lyons' store the night before. Then he had hardly recognized them; now Oren remembered them well, and remembered—as if he had long forgotten—the particular crimes and sins which rested on each man's head.

Last night he had looked at them with the eyes of Marc Oren, who had forgotten himself and did everything backward. But tonight he looked at them with the eyes of Nero Cram.

Terribly and mirthlessly Oren smiled. The lean smile went half up one cheek. He understood now that no one in Doom Vale had recognized him; how could they, since he had not recognized himself? He also understood in what fear they held him.

Nibbick Craven turned his head, and saw that silent figure looking in. He broke off a sentence. The mumbling voices died down. All men stared at the door. The silence was absolute.

"Evening," said Valuable Perkins at last, in a tone of uneasy presentiment.

Without answering, Oren went out into the dusk. Up and down Black Street he paced, keeping within range of his vision the lighted window of Nancy Cass above the hardware store. The light remained lighted. After perhaps an hour some one came out and locked the hardware store. Oren recognized old Nigus Cairnstone slinking hurriedly and furtively down the street.

He walked farther, thinking over many things. His mind seemed like a swift machine, it worked so exactly and clearly. He reasoned things out, finding huge pleasure in the sheer reasoning.

At the edge of town, in the direction of Lost Man's Lane, a man approached. Oren hailed him—

"Have you a match?"

The man stepped up; he was one of the prison guards, Officer 17. Oren offered him a cigaret.

They lit their cigarets together. Curiously above the little flickering flame Oren stared at Officer 17, and Officer 17 stared back.

"Kind of cold," said 17 at last.

"Right cold, officer."

With a wave of his hand Oren walked on.

He kept up his aimless pacing for an hour, then came to a determination. He proceeded back down Black Street, and went

up the stairs to Nancy Cass' rooms. His first knock brought no answer. At his second he heard her anxious voice.

"Who's there?"

"Some one you may remember," said Oren.

He turned the knob and found the door opened.

From a seat just inside the threshold, before Oren was completely in, a man sprang up. Oren was startled and crouched to the defense. He recognized Officer 17, in his prison uniform, with a gun swinging from his hip. Beyond, in the red shadows of a little hearthfire, Nancy Cass was sitting.

"We're keeping guard on Miss Cass, you can see," said Officer 17 significantly. "Colonel Drew got word of what you men are planning."

Oren ignored him.

"Do you—remember me, Nancy?" he asked with hesitation.

The girl had arisen. She knelt on her chair, grasping the back. Anxiously her dark eyes looked from Oren to the guard, haggard with amazement and fear.

Officer 17 looked at her.

"All right?" he asked.

She nodded ever so faintly.

"Excuse me," 17 mumbled.

He stared at Oren again. With a curt salute he backed out of the door, and closed it.

A silence came over Oren and the girl. He walked slowly toward the center of the room.

"I promised to come back," he said unsteadily. "So I'm here."

He was afraid she would burst into tears. The amazement and fear were still plain on her face.

"I'm 'Ro Cram," he said quietly. "Nero Cram. I said I'd come back, Nancy."

As the chair on which she kneeled toppled toward him, the man caught her. His arms tightened about her. With her head on his breast, he smelled the fragrance of her dark-red hair. Clumsily he patted her back.

She was sobbing, and even his arms about her did not quiet her.

"Why did you come here?" she was sobbing. "You should never have come back here!"

Oh, the falsity of women! Cram—we'll call him Cram now—who had gone near death, through pain and madness for her, could not understand. He only knew he wanted her, and was glad he had come back to get her.

"Didn't that guard recognize you?" she was panting close in his ear. "Oh, 'Ro! 'Ro Cram, they are hunting all the world over for you. You should never have come back here."

But she did not release him. She clasped him tighter, and Cram smiled, knowing that in the curious way of women she had never ceased to hope and believe he would come back to her. She would gladly die for him, with him, but that tigrine cruelty which is in even the softest and most civilized of women would never have permitted the thought that he was living alone.

Cram heard Officer 17 shuffling outside the door, noisily walking up and down at the head of the stairs to remind them of his presence. Cram heard a steamboat's siren blowing down the river. Far down the street he heard a dog howling.

Old Cairnstone's black mastiff hound had gone insane again. The shivering coldness and stillness of the air made his solemn barkings peculiarly distinct. Ten times, clear, solemn and loud, Cram heard the far dog bark.

For him this hour was sweet enough. He was more glad than he could say that he had come back to Doom Vale.

"WHY should that guard recognize me?" Cram asked softly. "And what do I care if he did?"

"They're hunting you!" Nancy said in deathly stillness, holding him terribly close.

"Hunting me?" whispered Cram, his glances narrowing and hardening.

"They're hunting you. They'd like to kill you on sight. O 'Ro, why did you dare to come back here?"

His tightened arm gave proof why he had dared.

"Be careful!" she whispered. "I think he's listening."

"Who's hunting me?" asked Cram steadily. "Is it that young Cairnstone hoodlum again, and Ferald and Craven and that gang of hill billies? *They* are the men who had better be afraid. I've got some bills to pay."

"Don't you understand?" cried Nancy, shaking his shoulder. "The Sing Sing guards are after you. They've guessed you're here. They've put a price on you—five thousand dollars—they will shoot——"

"Five thousand dollars is a lot of money," said Cram, laughing curiously.

The girl's fingers were digging in his arm. Cram got a glimpse, looking into her wide and dark eyes, of the terrible flame and intensity of her soul. He had never seen that intensity before, and it startled him. If she could love like that, how must she be able to hate!

"Listen, 'Ro! No time can be thrown away. The guard will let you out. He must let you out. He'll have to! They haven't got you yet, 'Ro."

"No one's ever got me yet," said Cram, still laughing dangerously.

"You know that hut on the Shaft Mine Trail? It's not been used for years—you can hide there—I'll bring food—Canada's not far—you can hide——"

"What do you think I've done, girl?" Cram asked heavily. "Whom have I to be afraid of?"

The crooked grin passed slowly from his face, leaving his lips firm and stern.

"I think—do you think I'm the Killer they are looking for?"

He felt the girl startle, and held her at arm's length. As he looked at her searchingly she lifted her eyes. They stared at each other, she with fright, he with a return of the calm laughter.

"You still have time," she whispered. "I don't want to know——"

"Do you think I stabbed my way out of Sing Sing—that I'm this Killer?"

Nancy Cass breathed deeply.

"I know you didn't have anything to do with what happened to Bub Ladd and Ferald and Dan Lyons," she said.

Cram seemed astonished.

"What's happened to them?"

"Hasn't any one told you?" asked the girl.

"I haven't spoken to a man since last night," said Cram.

The girl hesitated.

"But you were at my door last night?"

"You knew?"

She nodded.

"Who else was there?" asked Cram. "Who was it fumbling at your door at four o'clock this morning? I'll kill him," he said hoarsely.

The girl looked straight at him.

"You don't need to be afraid of whoever it was," she said. "The Fool Killer won't get you."

She was pale and shaken, Cram saw. Though she tried to keep boldness with her, she like the rest of Doom Vale was terrified of the terror which struck in the night.

Officer 17 was growing impatient. He stamped his feet. Audibly they heard his "Hi-ho-hum-m!" as he yawned.

"I know you're not the Killer whom Ladd and Ferald and Lyons saw," said Nancy without faltering. "But I know that you killed Major Drew to break loose from Sing Sing. I know that, 'Ro. And there are men hunting you. Five thousand dollars——"

"It's a lot of money," said Cram again. "It would mean something to you, Nancy."

"No! No! Oh, God!" she sobbed, throwing herself about him.

But it was too late. Cram lifted back his head free from her hands and shouted at the closed door:

"Oh, officer! Do you want to see me?"

The door creaked. Whistling a thin tune, a slow and dismal dirge, Officer 17 came in. He looked at Cram again with that straight look, hard and expressionless, perhaps idea-less. Nancy covered her eyes behind her arm.

"No, sir, I didn't want to see you," said 17.

Still Cram was urgent, as if willing to pull the very nose of Fate. He hobbled a pace toward the guard, looking at him steadily.

"Some one told me I resemble the Killer you men are hunting."

Slowly 17 shook his head.

"Why, no," he said.

"Don't look like him, eh?"

Again 17 shook his head.

"What sort of a man is this Killer?" asked Cram.

"Taller than you," said 17 doubtfully, "but not your heft, I'd say. He had a pleasanter look maybe."

"I'm not a pleasant person," Cram said, his eyes half-closed.

Cram laughed soundlessly as the guard went out the door. He heeled and faced Nancy, who had fallen or stepped back against the wall, frightened and wide-eyed.

"So you've been thinking I was in the pen?" he asked. "Did you think old Purly, a justice of the peace, and his illegal jury had power to send me there?"

Nancy stammered—

"But you went—they sent you there—Cherry Sloane took you away."

"Yesterday," said Cram softly, "I was Marc Oren, a man who saw everything backward, and who had lost the secret of my identity. Left was right, and south was north to me; and the most I could make out of myself was that my name was Marc Oren and that I had been in hell. I had forgotten even the look of you, or your name, Nancy Cass——"

He stepped up to her and caught her shoulders in hard hands. The largeness and darkness of her eyes put him in a mystical uncertainty, they held so much he could never know. Hidden fires were in her glances, and a strength of fidelity and passion which made even him a little uneasy.

"Something cracked, or something awoke, while I lay asleep today," he said, "and I had all the terrible dream of what has happened."

His face was distorted, and Nancy shuddered at all the pain it expressed.

"I've been near a dead man," he said quietly. "Young Cairnstone came close to murder when he hit me that bloody crack at twilight on Lost Man's Lane."

Nancy quivered as if his pain had been her own.

"Oh, don't——"

"I've been near dead," said Cram in the same quiet manner. "Something's been wrong up here—I've had dreams of the surgeons working—chisels and saws! Chip! Chip! A chisel grinds like a slate when it scrapes your bones."

She glanced at his shaven head. The scar half across it seemed to be redder. The veins on his temples pulsed.

"Hair will grow over that again," said Cram with a broken laugh.

Nancy seized his head in both hands and kissed him on the forehead.

"If Purly and his gang, the Cairnstones and Craven and the rest of them, thought they could send me to Sing Sing," said Cram harshly, drawing away from her, too fierce now for such soft caresses, "they were crazier than seems possibly for men to be. If that murdering blow hadn't knocked all sense and memory out of me, I'd have put them where it's hot. But I've come back—I said I'd come back—to do it now!"

"Be careful," warned the girl, winding her arms about him again. "Oh, be careful!"

"Are you afraid for me?" asked Cram.

"I'm afraid for them," she said.

In her look was perfect love and trust in him, but a hate unbelievable for all the cruel men of Doom Vale.

Later Nero Cram would explain, elaborating the details of that long mental oblivion, how Cherry Sloane, the old marshal who had preceded Nibbick Craven, had taken him part way to Sing Sing and turned him free. Whether old Sloane had been conscious of the *ultra vires* nature of the act he was ordered to perform, or whether he was afraid to travel too far with Cram, or whether Cram's friends had recognized him on the journey—as seemed most probable—and rescued him from that illegal custody, is not important now.

Cherry Sloane had not dared to confess on his return to Doom Vale that Nero Cram, whom all men feared insanely, was not safe behind strong prison walls. A stroke of Fate soon afterward, a fall down the cellar stairs while drunk, had kept old Cherry Sloane from breaking his silence.

That long year of forgetfulness, that year of madness and grinding dreams! Surgeons had worked to save his life, that much was clear. But out of the year only terrible dregs and slag of furnace fires of pain remained to Cram.

Probably he had been among friends; his social and political ties were stronger than he had intimated even to Nancy Cass. But he had no memory who they were.

What half-awakening had called him out of that unlighted forgetfulness two nights before, on the same night the Killer broke from Sing Sing? What had called to him by an inverted name:

"Marc Oren! Marc Oren! Go back to Doom Mountain!"

It had been but a half-awakening, and even yet it was hardly complete.

Did Nancy Cass believe the story he haltingly told of that year of silence? She seemed to. She must have. Certainly she knew he, a brave man and a strong man who had never struck in the dark or without warning, had no knowledge of the silent creeper, the midnight murderer, the Killer whose terror swept like madness through Doom Vale.

Had he anything to fear from the Killer?

THE hour was late, the moon was west, when Cram took leave of her. Officer 17 was sitting outside her door, his pistol holster unlatched, the corrugated wooden butt ready to his hand.

Warden Drew had stationed him there, hearing rumors of what some Doom Vale men would like to do to Nancy Cass.

By that door alone could any one get in or out. Cram glanced at the guard as he went down the stairs. 17 was watchful, wary as a hound. In the dark, silently creeping, soft as the wind, invisible as a shadow, up the stairs, no Killer would get him!

"Good night," said Cram.

"None for me," growled Officer 17. "A long watch."

"A good watch," said Cram.

Cram walked down Black Street. Only one man he saw abroad—old Nigus Cairnstone, sliding and scurrying along with his frock-coat tails flapping, his old eyes bent to the ground. Cram heard old Cairnstone's swift, asthmatic breathing as without a word that black-clad man of death hurried by. Old Cairnstone seemed never to sleep. Not that night would he be asleep.

The night had grown appreciably warmer under breath of a straight southwest wind. It was blowing up rain.

Cram paused undecidedly. To the east he saw the dark Hudson shining with ghostly lights—steady lights across the river, the dreamily drifting lights of ships. On the east shore a train trailed, fire before it from its headlight, and behind the engine the firebox glowing. Into a tunnel the toy train leaped and was blotted out; when it reappeared its headlight was turned away. It entered into the lights of a little town set like a jeweled crown upon the hills over the river, its cars flashing light and dark, full half a hundred of them signaling swift dots and dashes, a snaky barred comet flashing into a Milky Way of stars.

Up and down with stately procession passed the nocturnal ships, sailing silently and without hesitation into the ultimate bournes of the darkness. Red lights went north, green lights went south; and down the river where the river bent, boats came sliding past the turn with both red and green lights showing, like dragons with unlovely eyes.

Now there were searchlights, yellow and dim. As steamboats passed, their sirens screamed, their searchlights kissed; and on their decks could be seen wan shadows which were men.

The sky was black, the moon was hid. Black tossing nimbus clouds, heavy and smoky and low, crawled up the river, and around the bend. Swiftly they had clutched the moon, and eaten it. The moon was no more.

Stumbling along, shaking his head and breathing deeply of the night, Cram took a dirt road which wound from the town toward the river. Down, down the road went, into a copse of dark trees from which insects droned, and out again. Somewhere hidden in that somber copse was a swamp. Cram heard the bullfrogs thumping.

He emerged onto a flat grass land above the river and looked down at the drifting boats. Still and infinitely vast was the river at night. The storm gathered over it.

Behind him, from the swamp in the woods above the river, the frogs drummed their troubled grumbling.

"*Kum-kump! Kum-kump! Kum-kump!*"

An eternal warning sounding in his ears. Cram turned back and pushed through the trees till he found the swamp, which was no more than a little pool of brackish slime grown round about with sedges.

He picked up a muddy stone and cast it. With multitudinous swift splashes the pond was temporarily silenced. But soon there rose again that insane, threatening thumping, and the slimy waters rippled with great heads like warts.

Cram left the river and went back toward the town. The way was steep, and as he began to hurry, hurrying faster with each step, the dirt road tripped him up. His sprained ankle turned under him, but he did not stop for it. Sweat came all over his body. Suddenly he was afraid.

But he was not afraid for himself; it was Nancy Cass for whom he feared. Away, afar, hoarse and loud, he heard a great-lunged dog howling. A dolorous dirge at midnight Nigus Cairnstone's black mastiff dog was crying.

The barking reverberated from the hills which hang above Doom Vale. It volleyed sharp and clear to the river. Cram could not be sure, but he thought it was ten times the black dog barked. Yet it may have been only nine.

Cram was on Black Street now. Only one light was lit on all that long street, a dim light in the office of Perkins Inn. Cram had an impression of a man or two within the office, but he did not stop. He hurried at a half-run, sprawling and stumbling.

He cut across the street. Silently, with

tremendous leaps which strained the muscles of his hams, reaching up into the blind darkness with clutching hands, Cram went up the stairs to Nancy Cass' door. No voice challenged him. Officer 17, dead weary with two nights' wakefulness, was heavily asleep.

Cram could not see the guard, but felt him in the darkness. He leaned over, tapping 17 on the shoulder, but the guard did not awake. He only groaned, and his chin fell on his breast. Cram had a suspicion of drugs.

Beyond the door, in Nancy's room, was no sound, and Cram could imagine the girl too had fallen to sleep as deep.

As he leaned against the wall at the head of the stairs, breathing heavily with exhaustion, Nero Cram's quick ears were aware of many sounds and clamors in the seemingly silent night.

An awning on the street below was flapping in the rising rainstorm wind. Dead, crisp leaves of trees rustled. A shutter clacked, a door slammed. A horse trotted somewhere in the night, beating hoofs so clear and sharp that they were like a stick on a paling fence—*clackety, clack, clack, clack, clack, clack.* Up from the south a railroad train was whistling.

And on the stairs, on the black stairs where nothing could be seen, he heard a patient creaking. Upward, upward, a step at a time, Cram heard the stealthy creaking. Nearer, softly, deathly, the light and hushed squeaky creaking.

A shadow had crossed the dim rectangle of the doorway at the stairs' foot. He who threatened all Doom Vale was creeping upward in the black!

Cram's strong right hand tightened around the neck of Officer 17 as the guard shook his head and awoke. Cram's hand tightened, warning and threatening. Officer 17 was aware, at once on the alert. Cram felt the steady pulsing of the guard's throat, felt his neck muscles swell and tighten.

No sound was made by either of the two men waiting at the stair head. They held their very breath.

Cram was pushed back against the wall, drawing himself flat and thin. Now the creak was on the topmost stair, and now Cram knew that something crawling on its hands and knees was going past his knees. If he had but bent his knees, but crooked his finger, he would have touched a living thing.

Nothing could be seen save drifting atoms of darkness, floating misty and gray. Something rustled softly. More by supernatural intuition than by any bodily sense, Cram understood the unseen was slipping something beneath Nancy's door.

Then he shouted:

"I've got you! —— take you!"

He pounced. His strong hands closed around a throat. He lifted up a man who screamed.

Officer 17 had out a pocket flash. In its pale light as he focused it on the helpless creature which struggled in Cram's choking, merciless hands, both Cram and the guard saw the face of Dumb Nick.

"By Peter, this isn't our man," said 17.

"That's what I'm thinking," said Cram.

The guard snatched up an envelope, the white corner of which protruded from beneath Nancy's door. The idiot dwarf was frightened into a nervous shaking like an attack of fits.

Cram released his hands. Nick fell on his knees, lifting up his hands as if in prayer. In the ghostly light of the little flashlight, with his face to the blank wall at the head of the stairs, the idiot looked more than ever like an inhuman elf or misshapen gnome.

"What's that?" Cram whispered harshly, unwilling to disturb the girl whom he believed asleep beyond the door.

Officer 17 tore the envelope. He unfolded a typewritten sheet. The flashlight played a circle on it as the two men read:

> I will protek yuo from all Danger, for yuo are butyfull and kind. I wach over yuo like a daug, and I can bark and skrach and bight. I am yuor wach daug.

This typewritten letter was signed with that same mysterious hieroglyph which Officer 338 had found so mysterious.

"You wrote this?" Cram asked harshly of the trembling, kneeling dwarf.

Nick trembled so he could hardly nod.

"What's this sign—this N. C.?"

Nick struck his finger at his breast.

"That's me—N. C. spells Nick."

Officer 17 growled:

"So this is the fellow who scattered those Fool Killer letters. What's the matter with the idiot?"

"He's an idiot," said Cram.

"That's matter enough."

"Listen to me, boy," said Cram, laying his hand not too heavily on Nick's coarse hair. "You know I'm your friend. I'll not hurt you. I helped you yesterday. Now you tell me what made you write those letters. Speak up! Nobody's going to hurt you."

"They called me a fool," said Nick with hushed vehemence—"fools themselves!"

"What did you do to them?" asked Cram. "What did you do to Mr. Ladd and Mr. Ferald and Mr. Lyons?"

"I wrote them letters telling them they'd better watch out for me," said Nick. "And better they had!"

"What else did you do?"

"I prayed," Nick boasted.

"Prayed?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Oren. I prayed they'd get what was coming to them. And I did something else."

"What else did you do, Nick?"

"I jinxed 'em," boasted Nick. "I crossed my fingers, and I spit on the ground, and I said—

" 'Forclozun three days!' "

In the dismal dark the kneeling idiot, intent on the details of his incantation, was a terrifying thing to see—an idiot, a lost soul, a demon misformed and loathsome, saying a witches' Black Mass at midnight.

"What's he saying?" asked 17 hoarsely.

He made a quick sign on his breast.

"He won't jinx me with his deviltry."

Cram scowled his brows, pondering on Nick's curse. 17 swore a soft oath at hearing Cram suddenly laugh.

" 'Foreclose you in three days,' that's what he's saying," said Cram. "He's heard old Cairnstone, or some other screwing money-lender, say that to poor devils, and he thought it was a curse."

"Curse enough," muttered Officer 17.

"What else did you do, Nick?" Cram asked gently.

"I did that. I'll show you again," volunteered Nick, happy and ready to kiss Cram's shoes.

"No. I see what you did. What else did you do?"

"That's what I did. I crossed my fingers, and I spit——"

"Well, Nick, how about that rope?"

Nick thought.

"Mr. Ladd, he bought that rope. He said he was going to hang me with it."

"What else did you do, Nick?"

"That's all I did," insisted Nick. "I prayed; and then I jinxed 'em."

They couldn't get anything more out of him.

'Well, we've got the fellow who wrote those letters anyway," said 17. "That's something. Though it don't look like he had anything to do much with the Killer."

"Not much," said Cram. "That's plain."

"Turn him over to the town marshal?" suggested the guard, feeling that Cram, though he had no official position, was a man of power and authority.

"He'd be hanged by morning," said Cram. "They tried to hang him yesterday. You run off, Nick."

"You're not going to let him loose?" asked 17 doubtfully. "Why, maybe he's lying. Likely enough he's working with the Killer."

"Idiots don't lie," said Cram. "Only clever men do that. Very clever men," he said softly.

"But he's the man who wrote the letters that stirred up all this trouble," insisted the guard. "I don't see how you know he isn't the Killer."

"I know he's not," said Cram with deadly seriousness, "as well as I know that I'm alive. His silly threatening letters were only a chance coincidence."

Officer 17 was obstinate but subdued.

"Maybe you know a lot about this town," he said. "But I'd not take a chance on letting this lunatic run loose."

"Worse lunatics are loose," said Cram. "Killing lunatics. This fellow is only the praying sort, and they're not dangerous."

The flame of the guard's pocket torch went out. They stood in absolute darkness, no longer able to read each other's thoughts by their faces, if such reading is ever possible.

"Scat!" said Cram to Nick. "Back to your bed on the settee in the hotel, where I saw you asleep last night. No more jinxing, Nick. But pray."

"For what should I pray?" asked Nick.

"Pray for the Killer."

As the idiot crept down-stairs Officer 17 settled into his seat by the door.

"I don't feel right about it," he said. "Maybe you wouldn't mind if some more men in this town got what those three poor fellows got."

After a pause Cram spoke through the silence.

"I believe in the law," he said. "Mind if I sit down beside you? I'm here to see that no one gets through that door."

After an hour 17 startled from a doze and spoke.

"I thought I heard that door open!"

"No," whispered Cram.

"I felt a draft," mumbled 17.

"It's the wind outdoors," said Cram.

Toward morning 17 spoke sleepily again.

"How are you so sure this idiot isn't the Killer?"

"The Killer was with me last night on these stairs," Cram said ferociously.

"And you're sure he wasn't the idiot?"

"No," said Cram without any doubt. "The Killer wasn't Nick."

"Well, would you listen to that dog howl!" murmured 17. "—— him!"

IN THE office of Perkins Inn were old Valuable Perkins, Nibbick Craven and Nebulus Cairnstone. Craven was standing close to the stove, warming his cold backbone. Young Nebulus leaned over the desk, his head lowered, his arms close up about his ears.

"Train's coming in," said Craven. "Want to go to meet it with me, Small Change?"

Nebulus Cairnstone did not stir.

"I'm going to leave soon," he said.

"Sick of the rubes in this town, High Life?"

Nebulus did not answer. His posture was too dull to arouse much of Nibbick Craven's ferocious wit.

"I've seen deader holes," said Craven heavily. "Yes, deader. What?— The cemetery."

He laughed heavily, but not too bravely.

"Mr. Harold Ferald will see it too tomorrow. And I hope he rots."

"Your pa's a-burying Ferald in the morning?" asked old Perkins.

Nebulus did not answer direct.

"I'm going to clear out of here," he said, "clear out and away."

"Hop a freight," said Craven contemptuously.

Old Perkins folded his arms, facing Nebulus across the desk.

"What for are you going up to the train for, Nib? Cass getting some liquor in tonight?"

"It came last night," said Craven, "with *this*."

He jerked his thumb at Nebulus.

"No sir," he said, clenching his teeth, "I'm going to meet that train on business."

Craven drew on his woolen gloves and buttoned his coat. He turned completely around to warm himself for the last time thoroughly at the red fires of life. Faint, shrill, the whistles blew of the incoming train.

"Want to come along, Nebulus?" he said, more conciliatory. "It's a kind of lonesome night. I won't mind some company."

"It's a lonesome night, all right," said Perkins. "Storm tomorrow. Listen, do you think you hear a sound like the dam——"

"Dry up your dam!" swore Craven furiously. "It's been breaking for the last year. Sometimes I've got a notion to go up there and open up them gates, just to make your croaking true. Come along, Nebulus!"

"What for are you going to meet the train for?" asked Perkins again.

He lowered his voice.

"Do you think the Killer'll try to break from town tonight?"

"Why do you ask me?" said Craven. "Do you think I know?"

"I wish to God somebody knew something about him!"

"I'll know something," said Nibbick Craven, clenching his teeth to strengthen his heart. "Nat Cass tells me the mail cars have pictures of the Killer posted in 'em. He was going to take a look last night, but he didn't have time."

"You're going to take a look at Cram's picture?" asked Perkins with a queer shiver.

"That's what I'm going to do," said Craven boldly. "Come along, Nebulus."

The loose joints of Nebulus' shiftless, long frame seemed to have collapsed on him. He clung heavily to the desk, his knees and shoulders sagging. Old Perkins thought he was stricken by a fit, and shook his arm.

"Nebulus! Nebulus!"

The face of the undertaker's son was gray, a moribund gray. Perkins followed his staring eyes and saw the register lying beneath his elbow. The register was turned toward old Perkins, and he glanced down it.

"What's eating you, Nebulus?"

"Him!" whispered Nebulus. "Him— that name!"

Nibbick Craven watched them for a moment. He shrugged his shoulders, gave a jerk to his coat and snorted with contempt. The snort was as much to warm his own courage as to express contempt.

"Are you coming or aren't you?" he asked Nebulus. "Well, I'm going. I'm going to take a look at that picture of Cram and freshen up my remembrance of his face. Stick here, stick here if you're afraid of the dark, you squawking old women."

He paused again a moment for Nebulus. But Nebulus was horror-fascinated by a name upon the hotel register. Craven stamped his feet and listened to the wind a little nervously. He half-turned to warm himself again, but the train was coming into town. He turned up his coat collar, and he went out into the dark.

"Why, what's wrong with that name?" old Perkins whispered to Nebulus when Craven was gone. Old Perkins felt himself chilled by Nebulus' senseless fear.

"Why, that 's the name of a guest here. That's Marc Oren, of Florida."

The broad, dirty finger of Nebulus touched the name, lightly as if it might poison or burn.

"Him!" he repeated in a daze. "Oh, God! How long has he been here?"

"Why, he came up from hell——"

"Came up from hell!" screamed Nebulus.

Loudly he burst into crazy, crazy laughter.

"He came——"

"From hell to get me! —— all devils!"

"There's nothing wrong with him."

"Get away from me! Away from me! Away, away, away!" choked Nebulus, strangled with his own gruesome laughter. "Oh, he will get me! Get out, I tell you, or I'll kill you dead!"

"Why, there's nobody here," stammered old Perkins, moving his trembling hands.

"Him!"

Nebulus smashed his heavy hand down on the register.

"Marc Oren——"

Furiously Nebulus swirled the register so it was upside down to Perkins.

"What is that letter?"

"N."

"What is that letter?"

"E."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Nebulus, clutching his own throat. "Ha, ha, ha—come up from hell—to get me—Cram——"

Old Perkins had read, as Nebulus Cairnstone pointed, the name of Marc Oren backward. His head fell in his stiff hands. Slowly, as if he sank into a quicksand or a living grave, he sank down behind his desk.

"Oh, Nebulus! Nebulus! Don't leave me!" he whispered.

But Nebulus had turned, and swiftly he fled into the night, as Craven had gone before him.

But Nibbick Craven had gone ahead, and he was out of sight in the night. He had waited for no companionship. The way Nebulus went he went alone; and the way Craven went he went alone—they went their ways alone and singly in the smoky darkness, having no companionship.

Here goes Nibbick Craven, the village police force, the murderer of cows. Sturdily he trudges up the street toward the railroad station. No lights at all light his black journey. He whistles a tune through which runs one deep recurrent note, the tune of the old sea song, "I lay me down in peace to sleep——"

Trees rustle with the rainstorm wind, and they cast living shadows. The shadows stir, the shadows creep, the shadows of the poor, withered, gaunt, half-naked maple-trees cast barriers across his path, cast snakes which slide and slide, which lie forever in his path yet creep ever before him.

Hush, the wind! Hush, the far creaking of the Hudson! Hush, the stirring forests! Hush, the trembling mountains! The mountains tremble from their roots and foundations, for secret volcanoes toss them.

Hushed is the footfall which follows Nibbick Craven. In the darkness, in the darkness look behind you, Nibbick Craven!

Nibbick Craven has half-drawn his pistol from its holster, and his fingers curl around it. The night must be growing warmer or the rain-clouds thicker, for sweat comes over all the body of Nibbick Craven. And the joints of his knees creak.

Who follows him? Who is it following Nibbick Craven? Does the Fool Killer follow Nibbick Craven? Or is Nibbick Craven the Fool Killer himself, he who walks so softly and so craftily?

The long black railroad train is beginning to creep from the station platform, a hissing, disjointed, segmented worm. Steam hangs like breath around its head. Fire foams from its jaws, and it trembles, gathering its lengthy strength for a leap forward into the rocking night.

Breaking to a clumsy gallop, Craven charges up the hill and along the gravel of tl platform. He keeps pace with the opened door of the mail car, waving up at

the mail clerk. The clerk leans his chin on the iron crane across the door and spits.

"Hey, wait a secunt! Hey, hey, hey!" puffs Craven, shaking his arm. "I want to take a look at that picture of the Killer. Hey!"

"That five-thousand-dollar baby?" asks the clerk. "You can't come in."

Nibbick Craven jumps and clings to the iron crane. He swings under it, feet first into the car, pushing the clerk aside.

"I want to see that picture!"

"Y' can't come in!"

"I'm in," says Craven doggedly, showing his shield.

"No, you're not!"

Out into the flying night leaps Nibbick Craven. He rolls down a gully into a trickle of weedy water. He spits mud. Gravel and cinders are in his cheeks, his palms, his knees. He stumbles to his feet. Spitting and cursing, cursing and spitting, he slouches back down the steel road from the depot, while the swift-dwindling train flicks its last headlight mockingly around a bend and disappears.

Back into the ultimate darkness goes Nibbick Craven, under the tenebrous immensity of the skeleton trees, through deepest infuscations of the night of night. If he stuck his hand out, he could hardly see it now.

Craven slaps his thigh, feeling frightened, feeling something near. He lost his pistol in the ditch.

Night, black night, the night of the cloud-drowned moon. Each tree casts twice a shadow—one shadow for the shrouded stars, one shadow for a dark refulgence in the southern sky. Each tree casts twice a shadow, but men cast none.

Beware of such a night. Beware! Keep watch——

Keep watch! Beware! Look all about you, letting no shadow creep on you unforewarned. Nibbick Craven walks quickly now. He does not whistle; his lips are dry like paper. The prescience of death has crept upon him.

Watch out, Nibbick Craven! But why? Can you hit with your fist a little fog, or can you knock the strength from a shadow? Shadow past shadow deepens. Death flutters like a moth within the shadows, and like a bat within the utter black.

Thought is built of four dimensions, space of three, life of two—the beginning and the end. *He* is one dimension, and *he* walks among the unseen—where you will shortly walk, Nibbick Craven!

Harken! The wind! *The Fool Killer is abroad tonight!*

Out of nothingness, as he goes through the deepest of the black, Nibbick Craven feels something soft slip over his throat. Rough— It tightens— The rope is strangling him!

"—— —— you! —— —— you!"

Scream till your throat is pinched in two. Thresh with your dying strength. On your knees, and on your face, fight yet against the rope. When sense is gone, and the red stars drip like rain, and into roaring voids you hurl, you are meeting death, Nibbick Craven. This is what death is like, Nibbick Craven.

WAITING, waiting, late into the night sits old Nigus Cairnstone, the lean old, gray old undertaker, money-lender, furniture upholsterer and second-hand man.

Iron shutters are at the windows of old Cairnstone's gray brick house, for he is reputed to keep money hidden, and he is known as a miser. The doors are locked and double-locked, the cellar stairs are clamped. Have you put a barricade at the chimney flue, old Cairnstone, or clotted the open gas-jet?

One shutter is not locked. It slams with an even stroke, *clackety, clackety, clack! Clack! Clack!* In the night it beats its muffled taps.

As he sits at the window waiting, old Cairnstone sees a red haze on the sky. Is that the mirage of the far lights of New York, which sometimes shine even to Doom Vale when clouds form a roof over the world? It grows brighter. The lights of New York have never been so fierce and gay.

Outside the door the old black mastiff, Night, is beginning his dismal roar. He howls sorrowfully to the muffled moon. Solemn and slow is the old dog's cry, as he lifts his snout to the muffled moon. Black dog, are you hungry for green cheese?

Old Cairnstone is waiting, and he gives but half-ear to that baying. Once, and again. And again. The black dog howls. But now he is silent. Now, now he is silent. Old Cairnstone leaps up. Nine times the black dog barked!

In shuffling slippers old Cairnstone hurries to the door. Bar and bolt slide back, creaking a little. The door cracks and yawns and opens wide.

"Night! Night! You black ——!" old Cairnstone is sharply calling. "Nice doggie! You black cur!"

Hear the thundering silence!

"Nice doggie! Nice doggie! You hell-hound! Answer me! Come to me, sir! O Night! O Night! O Night!"

But the great black mastiff dog will not howl again. His old days are done. He sleeps with four stiff paws flung outward on the grass. Look to the sky! The shadowy ghost of that black dog is flying across its murk, yammering on the trail of vain black clouds.

"O Night! O Night! O Night!"

As old Nigus Cairnstone peers forth he spies a man who rises from the grass, from the dead dog's side. Swiftly, with a peculiar slinking walk which does not lift the knees, the man creeps on toward the door. His head is bent, his shoulders hunched, and under his ears he gives swift glances behind him.

"Yeh, yeh? Who is it?"

"Be quiet! It's me!"

It is Nebulus Cairnstone coming home.

"Where have you been, my son?"

"Gathering grapes from bramble briars!"

"Why don't you stay home of nights, my son?"

"I like to watch the moon."

Old Cairnstone holds hard to the door frame.

"What's happened to old Night? What's happened to the dog? He barked——"

"He'll bark no more!"

"What's the matter with old Night?" whimpers Cairnstone, drawing aside to let his son creep in.

"Close that door, you fool! I strangled that ——!"

"Strangled old Night!"

"Strangled! Do you know the word? I strangled him!"

"Well, he'll not bark again."

"No, no!" mutters Nebulus Cairnstone.

Old Cairnstone looks with bleak, anguished glances at his son. Nebulus' thin red hair is tousled and dirt-stained. His round, pink face, once so merry, is drawn with long lines of terror. His green-checked suit is ripped clear down the back. And blood drips from his nose.

"Where are you going, son?"

"To bed."

"To sleep?"

"To sleep," mutters Nebulus dreadfully. "It's almost morning."

"Almost morning — morning," repeats Nebulus, looking about him with dreadful, hunted glances. "In the morning will come the sun——"

"And it will be light. Where are you going, son?"

"Away! Away! I'm going away! Out of my path!"

"Would you hit me?" shrills old Cairnstone.

"Get out from underneath my feet, you old stinking skeleton! I'm going to get away from here!"

"Oh, son! Are you crazy, son?" yells old Cairnstone.

"Look out for the fire. The fire is burning up Doom Vale! Ha, ha, ha! It'll catch Cram! It'll catch Nero Cram and you—and me—and I—out of my way!"

"Oh, you young devil!" gasps old Cairnstone.

"Show me your money-boxes, you old skinflint, you ghoul, you miser! Out with your cash! Fork it over, I need dough!"

"Nebulus—what——"

"Shovel loose the money, you old corpse! I'm not speaking to cool my chin. I'm traveling far as the shady side of —— away from here, and I need the jack!"

"I won't let you run away like this, son," old Cairnstone chokes. "I'm not so blind. I've been watching how you've crept out at night. No money—no! Tell me why——"

"Enough!"

"Why have you——"

"Enough!"

"What—what are you doing—" old Cairnstone chokes. "Off of me——"

"Enough! Enough! Enough!"

"Oh, no, no——!"

"Go bury your dead, you grave-digger! Bury 'em—bury 'em, dead, dead——"

Nebulus Cairnstone screams with crazy laughter. He throws back his head till his lips are cracked with the loudness of that demoniac mirth.

But his knees falter under him. Suddenly, swiftly silent, he turns and runs from that house.

BLACK hour past hour went past; and on the stairs by Nancy Cass' door, sitting beside Officer 17, Nero Cram kept watchfully awake. The guard was heavy in sleep, exhausted and paralyzed by two nights of continuous searching. His breathing sounded in sharp, irregular snorts. Only intermittently he startled to himself, whispering some half-nightmare question at Cram to prove he had not been asleep.

But Nero Cram did not sleep at all, not allow one nerve to become momentarily dulled from the keenness of its perceptions. His ears hummed, his eyes were fastened straight ahead on the impenetrable black. Swiftly, straightly his thoughts were rolling, so swift his body quivered.

Cram had a sort of waking dream, formed of those swift and exact thoughts. He beheld interwoven shapes on the vast, swimming darkness; and like a mathematical proposition he put together events he remembered and events of which he had heard, till they were like a hard and steel-bright chain.

He started up, thinking:

"Who is this Killer men are looking for? Is he some one I have known?

Though Cram had been unaware until told by Nancy of the dreadful doom which fell in one night on old Bub Ladd, on Harold Ferald and Dan Lyons, he had learned from Officer 17 all that the guard knew of those mysteries, and what he knew of the Killer who had broken clear from Sing Sing.

What was the motive in common behind those three black murders?

It had not been lust for money; no, thought Cram. (How swift and clear his thoughts ran!) It had not been jealousy; it had not been hate nor sudden passion nor revenge for old, forgotten wrongs.

It had been fear alone which could have knotted those terrible strangler's knots, terrible fear that those choked throats would speak. What frantic, insane terror had been in those strong hands which killed? What terror in the man Cram had met on the stairs the night before!

Why had the Killer been afraid? What could the dead men speak?

So went Cram's reasoning. And his next thought was:

Old Bub Ladd recognized the Killer by his picture, and would have told his name to Craven. Therefore the Killer killed him.

And more:

Harold Ferald had record of the fingerprints of the Killer among the men of Doom Vale. Therefore he died.

Nero Cram was standing now. His shoulders swayed slightly, with a sort of jungle intensity, a tigrine fierceness which was habitual with him when he was near to danger or a dangerous action. He reasoned:

When the Killer slipped away through the side door of Dan Lyons' hardware shop, arousing Lyons by his clatter, old Lyons knew him. But he did not shout out, for he did not think the Killer dangerous. The Killer was a man he knew.

Cold crept up Cram's spine, but it was not fear, and his heart burned his throat. Truly Doom Vale had gaged him rightly when it said he was a dangerous man, for he had no fear. Fast came his deadly thoughts:

Whom had he known who would kill so furiously, with so little compunction—who but the man who a year ago crept on him in the twilight and struck him that killing blow?

"That's likely, that's likely!" Cram thought, hardening his jaws.

Who had been away from Doom Vale while the Killer was in prison—who had that Killer been who called himself John Doe? Who had now come back, seeking refuge in the secret hills? Where had Nebulus Cairnstone been while he had been away?

On the street below Cram heard men's voices upraised in loud and sudden cries, as if they had been privy to his thoughts and shouted for pure fear.

Cram's low oath awoke Officer 17. The guard stumbled up, his pistol already drawn, his sleepy eyes striving to behold the unseen form of Nero Cram.

"What's happened, sir?"

"I have him!"

"What! What!" stumbled 17.

"The Killer!"

Cram leaped down the black stairs, hearing the street below made noisy with shouts and seeing men running down Black Street, their forms darkly crimsoned in a growing light. Above him Officer 17 was pounding on Nancy's door.

"Fire! Fire!" rose the unsteady, quavering cry from all along the street.

As Cram stumbled through the door and

out on to the street he saw smoky clouds of flame marching with curling echelons up the street, lifting and tossing into the low-hanging clouds. The air was thick with reek of smoke. The Fool Killer, before he fled away at last, had set the town on fire.

From Perkins Inn, from the Red House, from store and house and hovel over all the town, men and women were popping. They stood in front of their doors, some of them with folded arms, some rubbing their eyes, some hopping up and down again, screaming and pointing to the fire.

Some turned and ran back inside again, whence they shortly emerged dragging sofas and pianos and pictures and bird-cages. Some ran for the center of town, some ran away; some sat on the cold ground wringing their hands; and some bounced madly about, grasping at every one they saw, howling:

"For God's sake, let's do something! Why doesn't somebody do something?"

The heavens broke. The swart, thick, nimbus clouds burst in a howling blast of rain. Sheets of water crashed and splattered in great bursting spears. They beat with hissing passion on the fire.

Swiftly Cram dodged through the gathering mob, drawing away from all men who were running to no purpose. Circling the fire by side streets and alleys, Cram came to the gray brick house of old Nigus Cairnstone. Its solemn front was strong and forbidding, solemn as a mausoleum; but its front door was opened and bursting with sheets of fire.

Old Cairnstone's house, three hundred yards away from the central fire which was consuming Doom Vale, was filled with fierce flame flowers. Poppies of heat burst from its door. A shutter crashed in blazing sparks from a second-story window, and fire roared from that burning eye up to the roof.

Cram wiped the blinding rain from his face. Half-in, half-out of the doorway he saw old Cairnstone lying. The gray old man lay on his face, his feet within the fire but his arms stretched out in the rain. Had old Nigus Cairnstone said his prayers? It would have been well; for now he looked on Eternity's face, and a knotted rope was about his stringy neck.

Perhaps that was old Cairnstone's ultimate prayer, lying between the fire and the rain—a prayer for water, for cold drowning floods, which are not so merciless as fire.

The Fool Killer had left that place forever, had fled from Doom Vale.

Cram did not pause, did not even hesitate. Not to the river but to the hills the Killer must have gone. Nebulus Cairnstone knew those hills, knew every secret pathway through the woods. But so did Cram. Cram hurried steadily past the edges of the town.

He panted now, wiping rain repeatedly from his eyes. He passed the sour-apple tree where the cruel men of Doom Vale had tried to lynch Dumb Nick. The dirt surface of the road was collecting pools of water. The road led through the heavy woods. It was Lost Man's Lane he ran on now, the road he had built to Shadow Dam. Up and around it wound. But Cram knew shorter and straighter ways.

He burst aside and climbed straight up the hills. This path, thick with leaves and overgrown with brambles, blocked by fallen trunks and leading up the sheer flanks of boulders, was hardly marked from the wilderness.

Nebulus knew the way, Cram was aware, for it had been up this way Nebulus had crept to kill Cram at Shadow Pond. Now it was turning fast to wilderness. But Cram felt, by keen animal cunning, that a man had run up this way before him. Cram could almost smell the hot and frantic spoor.

Trees *pat-patted!* with the rain. Their branches bent beneath the fury of angry floods. They wrung their hands and sobbed. Cram climbed over huge rotten logs, and pulled himself up by strength of shoulders and arms over the summits of morainal boulders.

In the vast storm and night as he sweated higher Cram thought once or twice he saw a figure toiling with exhausted speed up the hills ahead of him. He gathered strength to shout:

"I'm coming! You'd better wait, my friend!"

The terrible irony of that "my friend!" Nebulus Cairnstone heard; and though he did not know whether it was human voice or the voice of insanity and devils, his legs trembled under him, and he felt the retching agony of death.

No sense of fear came to Cram. He had never been afraid. In his dangerous fury he did not pause to ponder and doubt and hesitate like a coward whether Nebulus

Cairnstone, the maniac murderer, was armed; nor to question whether behind some heavy tree the murderer was hiding.

Up, over rocks which scraped his knees and palms raw. Through brush which tore with claws at his thighs. Through sodden branches which slashed against his face. Beneath stark trees which poured gusts of water.

Cram had no sense of weariness. He imagined he had wings, that he could leap up and grasp the clouds which sagged upon the hills.

The air was colder, and the rain sharp with frost. Cram was five hundred feet above Doom Vale now, so swiftly did the hills lift up. He ran into mist. Fog clung to the trees in tattered strands; it covered all the air; it drifted high in fluttering, damned shapes. He had climbed into the rain-cloud which had burst against the hills.

Through the fog Cram kept on. The air grew sharper, and on the trees beads of mist had gathered in frost. No forest sense, no woodsman's skill could tell Cram where he was now. He only climbed and climbed, meeting obstructions as they came, and passing them.

A crashing noise at his left came to him.

"I'm coming!" Cram roared.

The fog grew thin, and Cram climbed through it, out of the rain into a still, frosty air a thousand feet above the town he had left. Scattered rain-clouds were still above him; above them were long streaks which spoke of high wind in the caverns of heaven; and over the trees ahead of him sank the cloudy moon.

Cram had wandered far to the right. He had come out on Lost Man's Lane beyond the dam. The wide black pond was to his left, and fifty feet below. A mile wide and three miles long, it lay motionless as glass, black as pitch, a deep and mysterious water.

On the steep slope between himself and Shadow Pond Cram saw the Killer at last. Clinging hard to weather-blasted hemlocks, to oak and pine scrub, Nebulus Cairnstone was feeling his way up to Lost Man's Lane.

Cram waved his arm and shouted down:

"Stand where you are! You're my prisoner!"

What was the demon god to whom Nebulus Cairnstone screamed? Cram saw the tortured face of that lunatical Killer turned to him. Down steep rocks, clutching at vines and saplings and branches, Nebulus slid toward the black water. Cram knew it was a hundred feet deep there hard by the shore.

The cold had formed a rim of ice around the fringes of the pond. Cram saw Nebulus creep swiftly along in the shadow of the rocky bank, sliding on the ice. A brave man to step alone upon the Shadow in the night—in night or day to step upon the Shadow! No; it was not bravery, but a terror passing death.

The Shadow scratched like a cat beneath its rim of ice. The great black Shadow was afraid, for a step was on it that shook it to its deepest caverns. The Fool Killer was on the ice that night.

Cram slid down the rocks toward the water's edge. Stones bounced ahead of him. They clattered to the shore rim of ice, and slid until they slid off into the deep water. Nebulus Cairnstone was trying to skate now, with jerky strokes of his long legs. But his tight-pinching shoes, the shoes he had stolen from Duke Adair, clung to the ice and held him. With shoulders crouched he lifted up his face to Cram, howling the names of devils.

"Stand fast! You're my prisoner!"

Down on to the ice Cram came. There were but the two of them on that narrow strip of shining ice between the steep shore and the black water. But two of them, and no man to stand between.

Cram crept forward, not one foot from shore, for he heard the new-formed ice grumble and snap, and it was breaking at its edges. He drew the sharp air through his teeth. He watched the Killer's hands as he crept closer. Nebulus had whipped from his pocket a length of stiff white rope. Fiercely Cram laughed.

Step for step as Cram went forward, Nebulus went back. As he watched the Killer's hands, Cram knew the Killer was also watching his. Nebulus Cairnstone was terrified of Cram's strong, curling hands.

"Ah-h!" screamed Nebulus in a crucified sigh. "Don't come closer! Don't you dare! I'll strangle you like a mad dog!"

"Will you fight?" whispered Cram. "For your own good I say hold up your arms! You are my prisoner!"

"I'll strangle you by the throat!" sobbed Nebulus. "Don't you dare to come at me! I've got you now alone!'"

There was a loon laughing across the lake, a crazy, crazy loon.

Cram had maneuvered in his creeping approach so he was between Nebulus and the shore; not more than five feet lay between them. Silently he leaped, his bent fingers reaching out. The hurled rope whipped harmlessly past his head. Nebulus Cairnstone turned in blind horror, and ran into the water.

Cram fell back to the shore, for the rotten, tissue-paper ice cracked and burst apart along the whole shore's rim. Once he saw Nebulus Cairnstone's face, white and tortured with visions of his dead. Cram could do nothing, even had it been worth risk of his life to save a man for the electric chair.

White was Nebulus Cairnstone's face, strained and tormented with fear of hells beyond comprehension. He did not cry, for the black water was in his mouth. His last look was at the unrelenting, stern face of Nero Cram; and at the last he knew he was a fool. Then the water Cram had built washed over him.

IT WAS near an hour later that Warden Drew came riding up Lost Man's Lane by Shadow Pond. Cram saw the frightened face of Nancy Cass beside the warden, and he climbed wearily up the rocky slope from the water's edge to meet her.

The fear of long years and the horror of these past nights were evident in her face. The terror of the Killer would live forever in Doom Vale; and perhaps for her there could be no absolute forgetting. But Cram had visions of paradises beyond this evil place—islands in the tropics and free ranges of the West, where he could help her in the forgetting.

Warden Drew was speaking quietly, but Cram saw streaks of tears on his twisted face:

"Oh, God! Why didn't you let *me* get him?"

THE PIGEONS OF WONG FOO

by J. Allan Dunn

Author of "The Black Banner" "The Water Wizard," etc.

WONG FOO, hands across his capacious stomach, sat complacently in the shade of his *lanai*, watching the pigeons strut and coo and flirt in the brilliant sunshine while they pecked at the grain he had flung them.

They were a mongrel lot, inbred from a dozen that Wong Foo had brought from Canton when he acquired the little island of Piri, with its lagoon and the pearling rights therein.

But they were beautiful, with their iridescent necks and their coral feet, their well-balanced flight, and Wong Foo loved them for all that and the memories they kept bright of the land to which he hoped soon to return, prosperous in his middle age, able to marry, to raise sons and to live in full content, respected, honored and envied by the less fortunate, the less efficient.

When Wong Foo had first brought them to Piri it was with the intention of varying his fare, but he had changed his mind, there being something of the poet in Wong Foo—something of the philosopher besides a good deal of the merchant. He loved the sight of perfect pearls, symmetrical, prismatic and he had once written a verse about them.

The hues of the sea
And the colors of the sky
At dawn and at twilight,
Are vagrant beauties;
But the pearl,
Born of the sea,
Retains them:
So that a woman may wear them
And be beautiful
In the eyes of her lord.

Now he was meditating over another stanza concerning the pigeons. It was early morning, the palm-thatched *lanai* was on the west side of the house of Wong Foo, the hard work of the season was over, he had gleaned his harvest and he was very comfortable.

A blue pigeon, with barred wings, flew to the *lanai* rail and regarded Wong Foo speculatively. They were all fairly tame and fairly friendly, but it was Wong Foo who fed them and sometimes he had extra grains in his hand for the venturesome. The blue pigeon ruffed its gleaming neck feathers, cooed and made a short flight to the rail of Wong Foo's bamboo lounge-chair, sidling along it to the open palm full of grain that he offered it.

Back of the open space where the rest of the birds paraded was their house, shaped like a pagoda, erected on a pole. Wong Foo's fancy had hung little bells that tinkled when a pigeon entered one of the numerous doors cut for them. His ingenuity provided a system of closing all the doors simultaneously, after they had gathered in the loft for the night, and of opening them in readiness for their morning egress.

Back of this again coco-palms rustled in the wind, their slim trunks shining silver

"*The Pigeons of Wong Foo*," *copyright, 1923, by J. Allan Dunn.*

against the blue of the lagoon and the darker blue of the sea beyond the barrier reef. It was very pleasant on Piri, and Wong Foo fed his pet and amended his poetical phrases and, presently, dozed off to sleep with his hands still crossed on his capacious stomach. The pigeon regarded him curiously, its head cocked to one side, listening to the gentle snoring of the man, then flew back to the flock.

There was quite an establishment on Piri, lying solitary between the Phoenix and the Ellice groups. Buildings and boats and a community of forty natives, Melanesian men, shell-handlers and skin-divers. They were not overpaid, but they were well treated by Wong Foo and they were happy and peaceable enough.

There was Loo Ching, a young and energetic nephew of Wong Foo, who acted as foreman; and there was Ah Chi, a lowly compatriot who kept the house and cooked the simple meals. The natives had their own compound and grass huts, running their own commissary from the stores served out by Loo Ching.

It takes a year or two to produce even a small pearl. It is the custom to allow a lagoon a rest of from two to seven years to recuperate from a thorough harvesting. But Wong Foo held no such intention. It was his plan to clean up the lagoon, first of gems and then of shell, until he had reached the sum he needed for retirement. Then he would sell Piri to the highest bidder for what it was worth as a prospect.

This season's gathering had been rotted out on the leeward beach of Piri where the trade winds carried the stench far out to sea, and Wong Foo's calculations on his profits showed him very close to his goal.

It was small wonder that he dozed in peace, his face placid, his plump, well-kept hands rising and falling rhythmically with the swell of his diaphragm. Soon he would allow the nail to grow on his forefinger and guard this token of propserous idleness with a case of shell, inlaid with gold. Then he might be made a magistrate, or a mandarin of the fourth grade, permitted to wear a blue button.

LOO CHING came swiftly, scattering the pigeons, which wheeled in circles. He was lean, with an eager, hawkish face, a quick stride. There are those who, seeing Chinamen only as they face a foreigner, state that the faces of the Chinese show no more trace of sensations than a mask, that their nerves are insensitive, their poise imperturbable. But the face of Loo Ching showed high excitement, a tension of apprehension, and his eyes glittered as he abruptly shook the shoulder of his slumbering uncle and poured a jabber of Cantonese into his drowsy ear.

Wong Foo shook off sleep as a man flings away a cloak. His almond eyes were bright and filled with quick intelligence as he listened.

"Bring me the glasses," he said crisply to Loo Ching.

The nephew ran inside and returned with a pair of expensive and excellent binoculars. He also brought with him a revolver, which he offered to Wong Foo.

"Of what use is force," asked his uncle, "when it is opposed by a greater?"

He walked the length of the *lanai* to where there was a clear vista of the sea and focussed his lenses on a shining speck, like a sliver of silver, on the dark rim of the horizon. He gazed for two or three minutes, his plump hands steady. His eyes shone unblinkingly as he handed back the binoculars. His moon-like face seemed to have acquired a firmer mould.

"It is he," he told Loo Ching. "I have always been a little afraid of this."

"What are you going to do?" demanded Loo Ching. "They will raid us, kill us, perhaps, if they do not get what they are after. And we have only the one gun and a few knives. The Kanakas will not fight. What are you going to do?"

Wong Foo looked at his nephew reprovingly.

"It is idle to ask a question twice before it is once answered," he said. "I do not know what I am going to do, Loo Ching, but doubtless I shall know before they make a landing."

He went into the house, entered his own partitioned chamber and lighted fresh incense sticks before a gilded joss before he knelt down in front of the idol on a flat cushion, bowed his head reverently and closed his eyes. He was not asleep now but very wide awake. As awake as Loo Ching using the binoculars on the silver sliver that grew, little by little, presently dividing into two gleams of argent, the canvas of a topsail schooner, tacking, before it bore up on a long leg for Piri.

Ah Chi, fat as a porpoise, bare-legged, his yellow face shining with sweat from the heat of his stove, came waddling out. He had caught the anxious note to Loo Ching's query.

"What is it?" he asked. "What is the matter?"

"It is only a fool who doubles his question," said Loo Ching, passing on his uncle's chiding precept. "But I will answer you and then you can go and crawl into your oven. That schooner belongs to ——"

It sounded like Bhuli Hazi. It was the equivalent of Bully Hayes, poacher, raider, pirate and unscrupulous blackguard, the bugaboo of unprotected isles and atolls and of defenseless vessels. Looting, murdering, roystering, swashbuckling Bully Hayes, who honored nothing, who carried off women and thought no more of a man's life than he did that of a pigeon.

Ah Chi shook with terror; his slack jaw dropped.

"What are we going to do?" he stammered.

"Ask Wong Foo," snapped Loo Ching, picking up the revolver from the chair and regarding it sullenly.

Suddenly his face flamed with balked ferocity, and he flung the weapon away. It hit amid the pigeons, once more on the ground, and they rose with an indignant whirr.

"Go and get that gun, you fat fool!" he said to Ah Chi. "You will not be so fat when the sun goes down."

Ah Chi looked at him stupidly.

"You wish me to keep it?" he asked.

"You can throw it into the lagoon for all the good it will do us," Loo Ching said savagely.

"Do not disturb the pigeons," said the even voice of Wong Foo from the doorway. "Bring me that gun, Ah Chi, and then get some more grain for the birds."

Ah Chi waddled off, and Loo Ching looked at his uncle amazedly.

"Feeding the pigeons at a time like this!" he muttered. "The old man must be going mad."

Wong Foo regarded him with a glinting glance that suggested humor.

"That which is not understood is not always folly, Loo Ching," he said mildly. "Pray clean the gun from sand."

Loo Ching took the retrieved weapon sullenly from Ah Chi.

"Why clean it?" he asked petulantly. "If we use it there will be twenty bullets for one. You said so yourself."

"Why leave it dirty? Loo Ching, you should talk less and study more. What says Lao Tsze?

"That which may not be prevented must be endured with patience. Yet there is a master key for all locks and the name of it is Wisdom.

"Fetch me the unopened bolt of goods on the top shelf in the store. Here is the key. It is at the end of the shelf by the window. Ah Chi, I shall need you. Go and wash your hands."

Ah Chi gaped and Loo Ching looked his astonishment. Then the latter went sulkily on his errand. Wong Foo leaned on the rail of the *lanai* and watched his pigeons gobbling the grain that the cook had flung them.

"All beauty must be fed,"

he murmured, carefully accenting the rhythm.

"All beauty must be fed
'Tis leached by hunger
And, sometimes,
The greediest are the most resplendent."

The pigeons cooed and strutted, walking jerkily on their coral feet, the shimmer of their irised necks changing like shifted jewelry as they pecked at the grain.

The Melanesian divers massed on the beach, watching the schooner, which had come about once more and was now visible as a single plume of silver, its masts alined, coming fast, a bone under its stem, the wet hull throwing off a dazzle as it caught the light.

"Tell the Kanakas to go into their compound," Wong Foo ordered the returning Loo Ching. "They are to stay there until I come. Then you will find me in the house. Go quickly."

BULLY HAYES stood aft of the wheel, balanced to the pitch of the racing schooner. He was driving her, as he drove everything he had a hand in, and his eyes were on the little wind pennant that whipped at his main truck, watching the slant of it, quick to note the least shiver in the weather leech of the mainsail, keen to see that the swift boat was pointing its highest.

His helmsman, a plum-colored boy from Rubiana, magnificently muscled, stark

naked save for a strip of red cloth, steered faultlessly, but the nervous twitching of his eyes showed that he knew and feared the result of the close proximity of his skipper.

Hayes was clad in blue denim shirt and blue serge trousers, his feet bare, his legs hairy to the ankles. A scar across his nose gave his rugged face as neering twist, though his heavy mouth was open in a smile, showing stained irregular teeth through mustache and beard. His skin was tanned deep from the weather and his face seamed with lines of indulgence, besides the sea-wrinkles of the deep-water man. His eyes were green as the crest of a breaking wave, flecked with tiny spots of red.

His first mate stood at the rail, broad, bow-legged and long-armed, scarlet of hair and beard and face. The second was amidships where the crew, all Solomon Islanders, savages, with bleached mops of hair, ragged ear-lobes, scored with tribal weals and scars of war, waited to jump at the word.

It was a roaring morning, bright and full of wind. Trade clouds white as milk were piled in cumulous masses, and the gale blew out of them, vigorous with ozone. The force of the wind snapped the brittle crests from the racing waves and sent the spindrift scudding in horizontal flurries of spume that looked like driven snow.

The schooner leaped to the surge, crashing down the waves, blue as a druggist's display solution, till the white brine roared around her and streamed far aft in a yeasty wake. It churned in her lee scuppers and plumed about her bows like white feathers. Many men would have reefed in such a breeze, but Bully Hayes, secure in quality of rigging, hull and cānvas, carried on, exulting in the lift and fall and drive of her, eager to gather the prize of his trip.

The islet of Piri lifted fast from the sea. At first it had looked like a cluster of big-headed pins stuck on the horizon line, then the palms seemed wading out to meet them.

The hurl of the waves had weight, but the schooner rather rode than buffeted them. The reef points stood out like spikes of iron, the coiled halyard ends rapped against the timbers as the vessel plunged and reared and bore on close-hauled, seeming to fight for her head like a wild mare while the muscles writhed in the back and calves of the helmsman as he controlled her.

There was a trembling blaze of light where the sun struck the sea, little flashes sparkling out from the facets of the waves.

The helmsman shifted a swift spoke, threw his head on his shoulder, an inquiring eye on his skipper.

"Wind's shifting!" roared Bully Hayes. "Curse the luck, we'll have to make another leg to fetch her. Away on the sheets there! Let her pay off easy!"

The first mate jumped to where the second had already re-echoed the order, bawling at the straining crew. The fluttering wind pennant steadied. The schooner heeled and seemed instantly to increase in speed, like a runner lengthening his stride. The course changed to a broader reach with the wind now coming over the rail abaft the beam, singing through the forestays.

Hayes studied the nice balance of wind and sail and cast a glance about the firm sweep of the horizon.

"Hold her as she is," he ordered. "We're well up. We may make it."

The first mate came aft, soaked to the knees, his face gleaming with spray. The exhilaration of the weather and the lunge of the schooner shone in his eyes.

"By ——, she's a dandy!" he exclaimed.

Hayes nodded.

"She'll show most of 'em her tail. Come below, Thompson."

In the cabin he bellowed for his steward, a dish-faced Malay wearing a striped *sarong* with a kris in a belt, sheathed in bamboo.

"Gin and limes."

Shields, the supercargo, a foxy-faced and cashiered Scotchman, came into the main cabin from his trade room, treading like a cat.

"Fine weather for pearlin', Mister Hayes," he said.

"Aye. Sit down, Shields. We'll take a drink to the trip. Wong Foo will be pleasantly surprized."

"He'll have sighted us, no doubt. He'll be knowin' the schooner. I wouldna wonder but what he micht have been expectin' us one time an' another."

"Maybe," said Hayes indifferently, squeezing lime-juice into a tumbler three parts full of raw Hollands. "He's a bird worth the plucking. I got it straight that he's going back to China after this clean up. It should be a good haul. The lagoon's a rich one. I've had my eyes on it for a long while, but I thought I'd let Wong Foo do the dirty work. We'll make for Sydney after this trick and amuse the ladies."

The others laughed, tossing off their liquor, replenishing as Hayes passed the bottle. He looked occasionally at the compass.

"He'll have hidden the pearls," he said, "but we'll make him turn them up. We'll get 'em if we have to sift the beach for 'em. A sharp knife on his slick belly'll make him talk.

"Thompson, you'll come in with me. You too, Shields. You can sweat the Kanakas. Tide'll be against us and they say the reef-gate's a tricky one. We'll not go inside. Haywood can keep her on and off. We'll take rifles and revolvers. Serve 'em out, Thompson."

"How about a shotgun?" asked Shields.

"What for?"

"They say Wong's got a flock of feefty pigeons. They'd make good eating. Broiled and in pies."

"Always thinking of your guts, Shields. It ain't a bad idea, but there are no more shells. We've been too long at sea and the damp has swollen 'em. I tried to get some plover back there on Turua and they were all spoiled. I'll use nothing but brass cases after this and do all my own reloading."

Shields ceased licking his thin lips.

"Pigeons are good, but pearls are better," he said. "You can buy a nice little pigeon with a pearl, one without wings. And another, after you get tired of that one. It all depends on the size of a man's share."

Hayes surveyed his supercargo with a look inclined to be sinister but said nothing, though Shields' remark about his share was most distinctly emphasized.

Thompson gazed at his skipper expectantly. He had no especial love for Shields and he knew Hayes' methods of stamping out any incipient spark of dissatisfaction before it turned to contagious flame.

"Let's go on deck," said Hayes. "Come along, Shields. It's a prime morning and a sea running that's made for us but would be nasty for an open boat—very nasty. We'll have to be careful landing or we'll get rolled."

Again Thompson cocked an eye at Hayes then at Shields, the suspicion of a grin twitching the corners of his mouth.

The three went to the rail. Piri was in plain view now, line of white surf, light green of bananas and pandanus, the darker plumes of coconuts, the yellow thatch of Wong Foo's house and the glaring corrugated sheet-iron roof of the store. A number of specks shot into the air as if bombed and went wheeling far and wide.

"There go your pigeons, Shields. By the way, you don't seem to be quite satisfied with your berth."

The supercargo looked at Hayes, sucking in his thin cheeks, his pale blue eyes suspicious. He did not like the tone of his skipper's question. Mildly as it was put it held a hint as of a rapier grating softly over an opposing blade in preliminary encounter. But he spoke up.

"You mean what I said about my share? It's never been set, you ken."

"I *ken*," said Hayes and the word was like a thrust.

There was a sudden glare back of his green eyes, and his face darkened.

"I'm givin' you something to chew on, Shields. You robbed the last sucker you worked for. But for me, you'd be in jail at Suva. You don't know which side your bread is buttered on. But for me, there'd be no butter for you. I'm the provider. What I serve you be thankful for. "If you're not satisfied—quit—*now!*"

His malignant features were thrust close to the face of Shields as he strode close to him. The harsh fury of his bellow made the supercargo shrink a little.

"Quit now?" he stammered.

"I'll give you a boat," grinned Hayes. "Then you can row, bail, sink or swim and be ——ed to you! I want no grumblers aboard, d'ye hear me? Take what I give or get out."

Shields looked at the tumbling seas with their broken crests and his features seemed suddenly pinched.

"I'm no sailor," he muttered.

Hayes clapped him on the shoulder with a great laugh.

"Now you're showing sense," he said. "I'll do the sailing and parcel out the shares. You do what I tell you, Shields, and we'll get along together. Balk me—" his voice changed again threateningly—"and I'll put you overboard if it's the middle of a black night with a gale blowing."

"Bring her up a little, Mr. Thompson," he added, turning his back on Shields.

The supercargo licked his lips again but not from greediness. He knew he had been given his lesson purposely in front of all hands, and he was a canny man, if he had been careless with other people's money.

Like a cat detected in trying for the cream pitcher, he pussy-footed his way to the companion and disappeared.

As Hayes had predicted, it was no easy landing, for all the skill of the oarsmen and the genius of Hayes at the steering sweep. They got well away from the schooner, flung up into the wind, and clawed their way toward the spouting reef, riding like a cork in a mill-race. But the ebb that had prevented any attempt of the schooner to enter, fought against their strength with a six-knot torrent pouring through the gap in the coral. Hayes might have waited an hour and entered more easily, but that was not his way.

He roared at his men who tugged and threw their weight upon the ash blades until they bent like bows, while the sweat ran down, and the veins showed like snakes beneath their skins. Erect himself, holding the lever of the steering oar in a grip of steel, Hayes watched the swirl of the tide-rip, that held them as one may hold a door against intruders.

"Pull!" he bellowed and they pulled until their bones cracked and the smoke of effort rolled off their hot bodies.

They were in a gut with Death and Hayes had put them there deliberately, sharing the risk. He gave the word as he levered the light boat.

"*Hail Hail Hail!*"

An oar broke off, and the man tumbled backward into the bows. There were spare ones and the rest of the rowers labored to hold way until their eyes balled out from their heads with the prodigious effort. The new oar was shipped. Hayes had corrected the swerving lunge.

"*Hai*, you black-hided dogs. *Hail* Pull or drown. *Hail!*"

THEY were through and racing for the shore, the strain over, their savage faces agrin. Hayes steered them to Wong Foo's little wharf where they leaped for the planks and moored the boat. Rifles in hand, Hayes and Thompson in the lead, each armed with two guns, Shields bringing up the rear, they ran toward the clearing in front of Wong Foo's house, the Solomon Islanders giving fierce yell after yell. They were bushmen all and the peaceful beach-blacks of Wong Foo shrank from them, huddling together where Wong Foo had marshaled them in front of his house, where he had watched the pigeons strutting in the sun in the early morning.

Wong Foo was there, his hands hidden in his sleeves, his face showing no immediate emotion. Loo Ching scowled, and Ah Chi trembled like a jelly. The boys from the schooner surrounded the divers and shell-workers, covering them with their rifles, jabbering to each other threats of head-taking and oven-baking that made the others turn ashen.

Hayes had put away his guns in their holsters, but Thompson kept his trained on Loo Ching, scenting hatred and the will to resist. Shields had no occasion to menace the trembling Ah Chi.

"What for you come along with gun?" asked Wong Foo. "What for you make so much bobbery?"

There were times when Hayes badgered his victims. This was not one of them.

"Cut out the palaver," he said harshly. "You know —— well what I've come for, Wong Foo. I dont know what your idea of this reception party is, but the round-up suits me. Makes it easier if there's any trouble. That part of it is up to you. Come across with your pearls!"

Shadows flitted across the two groups as, high up, the pigeons swung in long loops and circles, disturbed by the intrusion, by the preemption of their favorite parade and feeding ground. Their crops were full enough, but they did not like these yelling strangers and they wheeled higher, in no mind to perch or alight until the confusion was over.

"No got pearls," said Wong Foo placidly.

"Dont lie to me, you yellow-faced baboon!" cried Hayes. "I'm in a hurry. *Sabe?*"

"I tell you I no got. Plently pearl one time. I send away along my fliend ship. I no like keep pearl along island. I think maybe some one come take 'em."

"You thought right."

The Chinaman's voice held a measure of conviction that registered with Hayes, but he was convinced that all Chinese were natural born liars and cheats—as he was himself.

"I come to take 'em. Where are they?"

"Evelly yea' pearl not so much good. Las' yea' velly small, velly few. My fliend ship come, bling chow, take 'em pearl. This yea' no good, only shell. You like take shell I no can stop."

"Blast your stinkin' shell!" cried Hayes, his eyes getting murderous.

He shoved a gun muzzle against Wong Foo's stomach.

"Masi, Ipoki, take that shivering hog. Shields, make him talk. Slit open his belly bag if he won't!"

They grabbed Ah Chi, Hayes selecting him as the most likely to talk. Wong Foo, he saw, was of stiffer mettle. The unfortunate cook wriggled in vain as they tore open his blouse and broke the string of his pantaloons, flinging him down on the sand while Shields knelt above him, with bared knife.

"I no *sabe*. Pearl no catch," he jabbered. "Pearl all go away. This time no pearl we catch."

His voice rose to shrieking Cantonese as Shields slowly drew the point of his knife down the yellow skin, across the palpitating stomach, leaving a thin red line where the blood followed it.

Suddenly Wong Foo lost poise.

"Wha's mally you?" he cried. "I no got. I takee oath along of you. No good you killee. I no got. Suppose I got, I give along of you. No pearl on this place. I speak true!"

The green eyes bored into the brown and Hayes read there fear of death. There was the absolute ring of truth in Wong Foo's accents and, for a moment, Hayes credited the statement that the supply ship had taken away the pearls. Thompson had his revolver pressed to Loo Ching's temple. The latter snarled at him.

"No can do," he said. "Suppose you shoot, allee same. Pearl all gone."

"All right, Shields," said Hayes. "We'll search 'em. They've hidden 'em somewhere, but we'll find 'em. You can't tell me," he said to Wong Foo, "that you got nothing but shell. Your lie's too good."

"We catch velly few pearl," said Wong Foo. "Seed pearl, velly few, lele, pearl. No good along of you. Suppose you want, I give."

"Is that so?" sneered Hayes. 'Strip 'em."

In fifteen minutes the men of Piri were as naked as when they were born, searched as thoroughly as any Kaffir in a diamond kraal, their garments ripped, blouse and loincloth scrutinized inch by inch. Questioning the native divers only elicited the fact that they did not know what Wong did with his pearls. A supply ship did come at regular intervals. It might have taken the gems. It was plausible enough.

"I'll take the store," said Hayes. "Shields, you search that house, thatch and all. Thompson, herd 'em."

Two natives went with Hayes, two more with Shields. The three yellow men and the boys of Wong Foo huddled under the blistering sun, not daring to ask for their shreds of clothes, the Kanakas hunkering, Ah Chi prone and moaning, Loo Ching and Wong Foo erect, watching the wrecking of store and house.

Over all the pigeons soared undisturbed until smoke rose from the looted store and flames began to crackle. Then they mounted. Hayes came back in a towering rage, empty handed. Shields ran out from the house with a calabash he had found stowed in the thatch. In it were about a pint of seeds, half that many baroques and nine small pearls, booty hardly worth a landing.

"Those pearl all I catch this season," said Wong Foo. The fear of death was no longer in his eyes and he had regained his composure; he seemed to have accepted the fate that might come to him with Oriental stoicism.

Loo Ching's eyes still flashed with anger.

"Sure of your search?" Hayes asked Shields.

"I've taken it all apart but the walls, and the boys combed the roof," he said.

"Burn it."

More smoke and fire went up in the bright day, driving the pigeons higher yet. Soon the native quarters were in flames. Every likely place was searched, including Loo Ching's little lugger. Threats brought only the same answers, that the lagoon had been stripped of everything but shell and that all pearls had been shipped for safety against such raiders as Hayes. Slowly and reluctantly Hayes came to that conclusion, still doubtful, hoping against hope.

The search had taken all the afternoon. There was no liquor ashore save one half empty jar of *samshu*. This the three white men emptied. The pick of the store goods was taken down to the pier and placed in the boat. Hayes glowered at Wong.

He itched to kill, to wipe out all life on Piri, but he hesitated. There were one or two matters of that kind already chalked up against him and they were getting fussy in Sydney. Murder will out, even if he

threw their bodies to the sharks. And even his brutality, spurred as if it was by *samshu*, balked at such wholesale and cold-blooded killing. He had done sufficient damage to take some edge off his spite and chagrin.

He looked to sea for his schooner and saw her, holding off and on with short tacks. In the immediate foreground was the pigeon house on the pole. It was three-tiered, with five entrances to each side and tier. Below them ran the landing-perches, above, the wide eaved roofs that gave it the effect of a pagoda. Green and red and yellow embellished it. It was the pride of Wong Foo's decorative instinct.

Hayes slapped his thigh. He had already determined to destroy it, but now he had an inspiration. He had overlooked the likeliest cache of all. For an instant his glance rested on Loo Ching's resentful features then shifted to those of Wong Foo.

The face of the owner of Piri showed only resignation.

"Give Wong Foo an ax," Hayes said to Thompson. "Wong Foo, chop down that pagoda dovecote of yours. I want to take a look inside."

Wong Foo made a little protest with his hands. His face was troubled.

"What for you do that?" he asked. "All same you take all I got, you make 'em all bu'n."

Hayes gloated, sure that his hunch was correct.

"I nearly passed up that bet," he said. "If we can't have pigeon pie, we may find some fine eggs. Give him that ax."

Wong Foo chopped at the pole at the point of a gun. The house swayed, toppled with a crash, the little bells tinkling, the roofs splintering. Hayes, Thompson and Shields reduced the wreck to matchwood, raking off the droppings and sifting them. There were no pearls.

The sun was dropping, the west flaming, shadows lengthening. The smoke had died down and, above the scanty vapors the pigeons wheeled, tired, fearful of the dusk, but more fearful of the happenings on Piri.

"We've drawn blank," said Hayes at last. "If I ever find out you've fooled me, Wong Foo, I'll hunt you out and skin you alive."

Wong Foo's face was inscrutable enough now. He shrugged his shoulders.

"No can fool you," he said and his voice was that of a broken old man. "You make plenty bobbery. No good."

"Going to sink his lugger?" asked Shields.

Hayes turned toward his supercargo. His bloodshot eyes seemed to make the Scotchman a little uneasy.

"Want him to starve to death?" he asked. "Glad you spoke though. That reminds me of something. Wong Foo, I'm going. How many pearls did you have in that house along that calabash. Not seeds or baroques. Hold on, Shields, I'm handling this."

The supercargo had dropped a hand to the butt of his gun with a threatening gesture toward Wong.

"Fo'teen small pearl," said Wong.

"I thought as much," said Hayes softly. "You sure of that, Wong?"

"What for I lie?" asked Wong Foo, mournfully surveying the wreck of Piri.

"You dog!" said Hayes to Shields. "Holding out, are you?"

He whipped out his gun and shot Shields through the wrist as the latter tried to draw.

"Go through him, Thompson."

The mate searched the bleeding supercargo and produced five pearls, all larger than those he had delivered to Hayes.

"All right," said Hayes. "Get down to the boat, you."

Shields, holding his wounded wrist, the blood spattering the sand, was hustled down between two of the black boys. The boat put off, reached the schooner.

The booms were swung out as the raiding vessel tacked and soon it gathered speed, sailing into the heart of the sunset, presently a shadow in the failing light.

AH CHI, his split skin tended, scattered grain for the pigeons, which were coming home, hovering uncertainly above where their home had been. Two boys, for the second time that day, held light casting nets ready.

Wong Foo watched the last of the schooner fade out. A pigeon came down and started pecking at the grain. Another followed. Presently the whole fifty of the flock were busy. It was too dark for their irised-breasts to gleam, but Wong Foo regarded them as if they were feathered with gems.

"It is too bad they burned the place," he said to Loo Ching. "But we have finished with it. Tomorrow we begin to load the pearl and then we sail."

He contemplated the damage with a certain smug complacency. Then he gave a signal and the nets were deftly cast over the busy flock of birds, enmeshing them.

Yet it was a lucky thing for Wong Foo, with all his guile and gifts of acting, that the damp had spoiled the shotgun shells aboard the schooner. For Hayes, or Shields, might have brought down a pigeon, and that would have disclosed the fact that to the leg of each bird there had been tied a tiny sack of red silk that matched the coral of their feet.

It was at midnight that Wong Foo collected the pearls that had been in the sacks and gazed at them lovingly in the cabin of his pearling lugger, a shimmering mass of perfect gems.

"To him who hath a measure of wisdom and who possesseth patience,"

He quoted to Loo Ching, from the writings of Lao Tsze,

"there is bestowed a fair measure of reward."

"I wish we had had more guns," said Loo Ching, bitterly.

IT WAS at midnight that a despairing cry sounded across the sea from a small boat, one taken from Wong Foo's little fleet for the purpose. The man that uttered the cry gazed with straining eyeballs toward a light that rose and fell as the schooner raced away through the slashing seas. It shone from the after cabin where Hayes sat moodily drinking and fingering fourteen small pearls, some seeds and baroques.

The cock-boat pitched in the trough, shipped water, and rolled in a swirl of phosphorescence. Shields grasped an oar with his one sound hand and strove to head on to the run of the waves. There was a keg of water in the stern, some biscuit and a little bully beef. A short mast and a rag of sail, if he could ride out till morning and ship the one and set the other. But, as he had said, he was no sailor.

SUE

by Bill Adams

THERE'S a bar-maid down to Poplar, at the old King's Arms hotel,
That likes to hear the curious things us sailors has to tell;
She wears a comb of tortoise-shell upon her shining head,
Her eyes are blue as china, and her braided hair is red.

Her name is Susan Belcher, and a topping lass is she
To serve good ale to sailormen come homing from the sea;
Her picture's by the pillow of many a sailor's bed,
And here and there a lock or two from off her pretty head.

We sits and watches Susan, while Susan talks to we,
And asks peculiar questions of ships upon the sea.
We clinks our mugs together her pretty health to drink—
And now and then, behind his mug, you'll see some sailor wink!

We wishes luck to Susan, for she's a pretty dear;
There never was a finer lass to pour poor seamen's beer;
And we bring her talking parrots, and whistling cockatoos
And little silver buckle things to ornament her shoes.

Miss Susan has a sweetheart, who she thinks will soon be in,
And thinks that when he does get back her wedding bells will ring;
But her sweetheart he got drownded; from up aloft he fell;
There's lots of us that knows of it, but not a man to tell.

No use to love one sailor; no use to pine and sigh;
We hope Miss Susan will forget her lover by and by:
And so we sits at Poplar, in the old King's Arms hotel,
Each hoping, when she has forgot, to ring that wedding bell.

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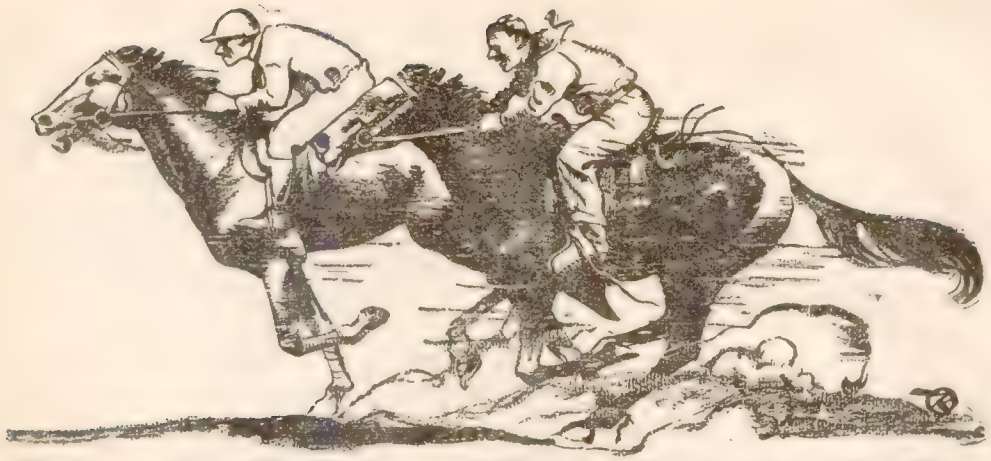


BLACK DANGER

by MARY SHANNON

PETE OGDEN drew in his pinto cayuse on the peak of a hill. Grassy undulations stretched away until the distant lines were lost in purple mist. Before him the land dipped to a valley, traced by a brown wagon road. Shading his eyes from the setting sun, he looked intently down where the gray log buildings of a ranch clustered on either side this road.

"Yeh, there's a crowd down there, Pinto," he remarked, nodding his head convincedly. "Gettin' in fer the races. They'll start tomorrow. That Injun was right. It's the fourteenth. Must've fergot to mark a day off!"

He passed his hand in a troubled way across his forehead where a broad scar stretched back into his unkempt sandy hair.

"It don't matter back at the cabin—about fergettin', but we mighta missed the races, Pinto, an' us countin' on 'em so! Come all the way from River Meadow."

He was a small man with a droop to one shoulder that caused his ragged coat to sag queerly in the back. He took off his battered cowboy hat, and dreamily studied the ranch buildings. His troubled expression gave place to one of contentment.

"Good ol' place!" he murmured fondly, "good ol' Ogden Ranch!"

For the moment the years slipped away, and he had forgotten that the place no longer belonged to an Ogden. There was an edge of chill in the September air. Winter comes early and lingers late in Northern Idaho. Already the frost was withering the grass and touching the leaves to red and gold. Riding down the circuitous slopes, Pete halted beside a white-fenced graveyard. Through the pickets his eyes searched the inscription on the largest of the weather-beaten head-stones.

"Peter Ogden, died 18—, aged 70 years. Gold Valley, Idaho."

"It's gettin' harder to read it," he mused. "Twenty years since we buried gran'dad. If he was livin' we'd be down there with the best of 'em, Pinto. Times has changed, eh, boy?"

Again his dreamy gaze wandered to the valley below, the place where the drama of his simple life had been staged. He was born on that ranch, and had never been outside Gold Valley. He had never had the least desire to leave it. Only echoes of the great world reached that isolated region; yet once the interest of financial centers had focused there.

Some sixty years before the road was a trail beaten by thousands of eager feet in the mad rush for gold. Those were days of profligate living, of reckless spending, when men were ready to barter body and soul for gold and yet more gold. But the boom days had long since passed, and with them had gone the horde of adventurous miners. The trail had widened to a road, and here and there beside it, log houses were built. The once famous gold region was

"Black Danger," copyright, 1923, by Mary Shannon.

now a scattered grazing country, with little to recall the glamourous boom.

Chief event that kept fresh the memory of those days was the Racing Meet held annually at Ogden Ranch, ever since old Pete Ogden had built the house and given the purse for the big race—the Gold Valley Derby. It seemed an incongruity that the man with the scarred forehead should bear the same name. Some such thought shaped itself in his mind:

"He counted on me—did gran'dad. 'I'm trustin' to you, Pete,' he used to say. 'You keep the ranch. I don't want it should ever go outside the family. Ike—he's different. He don't care about it like you an' me. You an' him's all the Ogdens that's left.' "

A haggard wistfulness settled on the thin features, but he went on defiantly:

"I'd a done it, too, if I hadn't got throwed, breakin' that horse. They wouldn't let me ride any more—me that used to be the crack rider in the valley, Pinto."

He leaned forward and patted the cayuse's neck.

"They don't know how I ride now, Pinto. They don't know about Black Danger an' me. He could jump them bars down there easy. They don't know I got him, an' we won't ever tell 'em."

The cayuse pricked his ears inquiringly.

"You're a knowin' horse, Pinto, but you ain't as knowin's Black Danger. Not but what I think a pile o' you too," he added quickly.

There was a mute longing in the childish mind as he rode over the fields and along the creek where he had played as a boy. He felt no anger against the brother who, the whole country declared had cheated him. He had not seen Ike for a year, and he was looking forward to a talk about old times. It seemed to bring back the days when their grandfather lived, and they were all happy together. He puzzled over the change that had come since that time. His head had never been right since the accident, and somehow he had drifted into drinking and gambling.

Then had come that terrible day when Ike had forced his consent to selling the ranch. He didn't resent the fact that after his reckless foolish spending he could expect nothing from the sale, but the thought of the old place in the hands of a stranger was more than he could bear. Ike had offered a home with him in that town to which he was moving, but Pete clung to Gold Valley. The weeks following were a blur, for, unable to witness the breaking up of the old home, he had ridden off into the hills. During those heart-sickening days he had strayed lonesomely into far back valleys, riding aimlessly into solitary places, thinking of the bewildering change that had come into his life.

There he had found Black Danger. A dead mare beside the half-starved colt roused Pete's pity, and he finally succeeded in luring the wabbly-legged creature to a deserted cabin at River Meadow. There was no brand on the dead horse, and Pete concluded she had belonged to a band of wild horses that sometimes strayed in from a distant region to graze.

Four years had passed, and the sickly colt had grown into a beautiful spirited stallion. He brought happiness into Pete's life, a loving interest to fill his days. Many long rides he took, training Black Danger to race strays, lavishing on him all the skill he had acquired in years of riding and working with horses. He was careful to ride him only in back valleys and over unfrequented hills, jealously guarding his one possession. When he visited old friends, it was always Pinto he rode.

As he neared the stables he watched the crowd absently. In fancy he saw the figure of a tall man whose spirit yet seemed to dominate the place. As far back as Pete could remember, the passing of the years had been marked by the races, the chief figure in his simple life, this man, his grandfather, old Pete Ogden. Even as a small boy he had thrilled with pride when the men called him "Little Pete;" and how clearly he recalled the day when somebody first spoke of him as "Young Pete."

Suddenly he jerked the reins, and the surprized cayuse stiffened his legs to a standstill on the steep incline. The contrast between those days and now gripped him cruelly, and he shrank from meeting old friends. Too well he knew what they called him now—"Poor Pete!"

In his bitterest moment he had one ray of comfort. His grandfather had died before it happened. He wheeled Pinto about. He would go back to the cabin where it was quiet, where no one called him Poor Pete, and where Black Danger would greet him with a joyous whinny.

A group of cowboys, riding hilariously over the hills, spurred their horses toward him.

"Hulloa, Pete! What's up? Slept in this morning?"

"Bet you dollars to doughnuts Pete's gonna put that Pinto in the big race!"

"Get a move on you, Pete. You'll be late!"

He turned and rode back with them, dismounting in the corrals. Joe Harrington, white bearded and stooped, got up from a pile of rails and shambled over to shake hands.

"Pete, where th' —— you been? I looked fer you all day!"

"Guess I fergot to mark a day off," stammered Pete. "It's the fourteenth, ain't it?"

"Fourteenth! It's the fifteenth, boy. You missed the first day entirely. By cripes, I knowed somethin' was wrong."

Pete's jaw dropped in chagrin, and he looked helplessly round at the grinning faces. A youth, obviously conscious of new chaps and spurs, remarked:

"Got a patent on that calendar of yours, Pete?"

Joe gave him a withering look.

"Say, kid, them new duds gone to your head, ain't they? Think I heard yer ma yellin' fer you. Come on in, Pete. We'll have some supper. Sure, you're comin' in along with me."

"Ike—is he here?" asked Pete eagerly.

"Yeh, he's round somewheres. Went fer a ride I believe. He'll be back fer supper, though. Let's eat, boy."

PETE walked through the corrals to the house with Joe. He always felt more at ease in the company of this old man, who had been a lifelong friend of his grandfather. An odd-looking figure Joe was, dressed in the same baggy gray clothes he had worn since the younger generation could remember. His felt hat, green with age, slouched over a ruddy face and sharp gray eyes, the back brim resting on his stooped shoulders. He was the oldest resident in Gold Valley, so old that he had become a sort of tribunal. When newcomers asked him his age, he chuckled, and said he had forgotten it.

In the crowded dining-room the two found seats at a noisy table.

"A couple o' steaks, Wing, thick an' juicy," called Joe to the white-aproned Chinaman at the kitchen door.

At the head of the table sat Bruce Pennington, the present owner of the ranch, a clear-skinned Englishman, dubbed Lord Penny for so long that his real name was forgotten. Though a "remittance man," the reputation of being a good sport had enabled him to live down that misfortune. There were other Englishmen, in various stages of civilization, as Gold Valley expressed it; a number of Easterners looking rather askance on some of the proceedings of the races; and, of course, Gold Valley natives were present to the last man.

Pete, with the rush of old memories crowding upon him, kept his eyes on his plate, but Joe was enthusiastically discussing the races.

"Well, Pete, you missed a big day. Some crackin' good horses here. It's between Ike's Stella May an' Lord Penny's Queen Mab fer the Ogden purse. Money's strong on Ike's horse."

"Meself, I'd like to see Queen Mab win," put in a cowboy. "She's a Gold Valley horse. Can't get away from that."

"Stella May's a down-country horse," agreed Mike McCarthy, an old-timer. "'Tain't often any outside horses comes."

Joe glanced up quickly.

"Well, Ike's an Ogden," he retorted shortly.

"'Twas an Ogden won the first race, I believe," remarked an Englishman.

"You're right, son, it was," answered Joe emphatically. "Gosh, that *was* a race! 'Twas in the early sixties. Everybody was flush. Dollar a pound fer flour, an' a dollar a piece fer spuds. Mines pannin' out to beat ——! You kin guess how the gold dust piled up on a horse race. 'Twas between Old Pete Ogden's cayuse an' a spindly-legged high-stepper some fresh guy brought in a purpose to skin the camp. It was rainin', an' the road was sticky. By cripes, that danged little cayuse hid hills on the high-stepper! There ain't never been such a night in Gold Valley since. I wasn't much more'n a kid, but I remember it like yesterday. 'Twas in Al Smith's saloon—the Angel's Rest he called it—on towards daylight, when Pete gets up on the bar an' stuffs his big leather purse with the real stuff, gold dust, the richest ever found in the country. He lifts it up

to the crowd an', says he, 'This to the son-of-a-gun that'll beat my cayuse this day one year.' An' that was the starter o' the Gold Valley Races."

"How very interesting!" put in an Englishman, a resident in the country one month.

"Pete made a haul that year," continued Joe, "an' not bein' one o' these that's fer hoggin' all he could get an' skinnin' off back East—" here Joe looked meaningly at a newly arrived Easterner—"why, he takes up this ranch an' builds this very house we're settin' in—first ranch in the valley. Some more o' us done the same thing, an' next year Pete was as good as his word an' we had the races in that field where we've had 'em ever since. I got hold of a horse that beat Pete's so I got the purse."

"Then *you* have the honor of being the first to win the Ogden purse," remarked Lord Penny, politely interested, though he had heard the story annually since coming to Gold Valley.

"Reckon you'd call it that," returned Joe modestly as he forked a piece of bread.

"I remember that night," chuckled Mike McCarthy. "We was all pretty well loaded, Joe, an' you got up on the bar that used to be in the card-room there an' give the purse back to Pete to be kept fer the next year. The boom was dead, an' the town was flatter'n a pancake, but Pete 'lowed we could raise five hundred between us. An' that's what's happened every year since. The fellah that wins the purse just slips it back in a day or two an' gets the five hundred."

Pete's fascinated eyes had turned from one speaker to the other during the oft-repeated story of the historic purse. He dropped his gaze as Joe turned to him and added—

"Yeh, we ain't ever touched the purse since the big night when yer gran'dad filled it, Pete."

"How very extraordinary!" exclaimed the uninitiated Englishman. "But, I say, you know, suppose the purse should be won by somebody who didn't want to give it back?"

Joe looked at him narrowly.

"Say, mister, sharks don't grow in Gold Valley. If they happen in here, by cripes, they don't stay long. Climate ain't healthy. See?"

The laugh that followed did not appear to disconcert the stranger, and he continued:

"A great responsibility, I should say, keeping the purse. You have it in charge, have you not?"

"I *have*. Bein' the next old-timer they thought I was in line fer it. But I ain't never lost no sleep over it," returned Joe dryly.

"It strikes me as quite unusual, the way your races are conducted. The informality, you know," persisted the Englishman.

"Don't believe I get you," returned the old man with deliberate emphasis.

"Why, as I understand it, you charge no entry fees. Anybody who has a horse can run him in one or all of the races. You have no board to announce the winners. Very odd, it strikes me."

Joe fixed disgusted eyes on his inquisitive neighbor.

"Say, if a man's got a good horse an' wants to run him he's got a right to, ain't he?"

"But I should think it would quite upset the betting to have a winner come in, say at the last minute. Now, in England——"

Joe brought his fist down on the table.

"Any darn cheap-skate that's afraid o' his money better stay home an' watch it! That's all I got to say. About puttin' up a sign to say who's the winners—well, everybody's at the finishin' line an' kin see fer himself if he uses his eyes, can't he? Then what th' —— do you want a put up a sign fer?"

Here Joe shook his head as though the density of greenhorns was beyond his comprehension.

While the room rang with laughter, Ike Ogden, accompanied by a short, slight man, came in. Sighting Pete, he came around the table to shake hands.

"I want to have a talk with you after supper," he whispered, then went to a seat next Lord Penny.

Pete's eyes followed him wistfully. He was proud of this brother, a handsome, florid man, rather showily dressed. But Ike's first words as he joined in the conversation carried a hurt.

"One thing you need up here is a decent track. That field's rough, and it slopes too much. A horse that's used to a track doesn't have a fair show."

Joe's voice, belligerently defensive, broke a surprized silence.

"We've run the races on that field since the sixties, Ike. Sorry it don't suit you. 'Twas good enough fer yer gran'dad."

The talk became general, and Joe confided to Pete—

"It's that little crook of a jockey that's with Ike that's been shootin' off about the track."

From the big living-room across the hall crashed the opening bars of, "I'll Bet My Money on the Bob-tailed Nag," a lively dance tune that had strayed in during the boom and was still popular.

"Grand March, an' everybody *dance!*" yelled the "caller."

There was a rush for partners, a crowding to the doors to watch the opening of the ball. In Gold Valley there was no waiting until a fashionably late hour before beginning to dance. From supper to breakfast was the shortest period considered, and often it took several days to consume the dormant energies of the young people. As Joe and Pete stood in the doorway, a laughing girl tripped across the room and drew the old man into the march amid great applause. Pete slipped out and was walking toward the stables when Ike and the jockey overtook him.

"WANT you to see my horse, Stella May," remarked Ike affably, handing his brother a cigar. "She's a beauty! There's never been anything in this country to touch her. There's some money on her, I can tell you!"

She *was* a beauty, a chestnut, clean-limbed, trim and shining from thorough care. Pete checked an impulse to tell Ike about *his* horse.

"Let's take a walk down the road. I've got to have a talk with you," said Ike as they sauntered out into the moonlit yard, leaving the jockey busy around the mare.

When they were out of sight of the house he began:

"Pete, it's all +—— foolishness about the purse. Grandfather never really gave it to the races. It belongs to us—to you and me."

Pete was silent, looking at his brother with wide startled eyes.

"—— it all, can't you speak?" blustered Ike.

"You don't mean—you want to take it back!" Pete's incredulous voice was a dry whisper.

"I tell you it's ours," returned Ike stubbornly. "I need the money—get some more horses. There's a few thousand in gold dust I could use. I'll share with you, of course, Pete," he finished cajolingly.

Instinctively Pete's eyes turned toward the hillside, where he seemed to see an old head-stone. He straightened his sagging shoulders:

"I—you hadn't ought to do it, Ike. You can't do it. 'Tain't right. Gran'dad give that gold all himself, an' everybody knows about it. We got no claim on it. The races owns it. You leave it be."

"Like —— I will!" retorted Ike. "Stella May'll win tomorrow, and I keep the purse. I'd like to see the man that'll take it away from me. They can whistle for it once I get it in my hands. This old joint gets worse every year. The races'll die out some time, and nobody else has any right to the gold dust but us."

"Ike," pleaded Pete, putting his hand on his brother's arm, "don't try to do it. Why, gran'dad was awful proud o' that purse—o' the races. Remember how he wanted us to always keep the ranch? Well, the ranch—it's gone, but the purse—it's the Ogden purse, Ike, an' you— Oh, you can't take it back! He wouldn't ever have done it if he'd starved!"

Angrily Ike pushed the light form from him.

"You poor brainless fool! See to it that you keep your mouth shut. I'll do as I like about it. Don't let on to Joe or any of them, and if they raise a row you're to back me up, see? It's little enough you can do for me after all the worry I had with you. Understand? You're to back me in this. There's nobody else can really make trouble about it. Now let's go on back to the house."

But Pete shook his head, and watched dazedly the nonchalant figure sauntering along the road. Bewildered, he tried to understand what it all meant. He couldn't think fast; so many new ideas confused him. But this much was clear: Ike, his brother, an Ogden, was going to take back the purse their grandfather had given long ago for the big race! The thought appalled him, turned him sick. Oh, he must stop it somehow! He started after Ike. He would plead with him, beg him not to do this thing—disgrace the name of Ogden.

Ike was in the stable, laughing and talking among a group of men. Pete stood back in the shadows and watched for a chance to catch his eye. From the house floated sounds of merriment. The fiddlers played their gayest, and the shuffling of feet mingled with the sounds of laughter. Mechanically Pete listened to the "caller" through a whole change:

> "First lady to the right——
> Swing that man that looks so neat,
> Now that man with the great big feet;
> Next the man that hangs on the wall,
> Now that man you kissed last Fall!"

How long ago it was since Ike and he were hosts at that dance! Gran'dad had made them promise to stand by each other. Again he seemed to hear the kindly voice, "You're all the Ogdens that's left." Oh, it couldn't be that Ike cared more for the gold than for the memory of the man who had been father and mother to the two boys! Finally, his brother, catching sight of the troubled face at the window, turned and came out into the yard.

"Look here, Pete. You do as I say. If any question comes up about this you're to back me. That's all you got to do, and see that you mind me."

But with the courage of desperation Pete pleaded:

"Ike, think o' the disgrace. Everybody'd talk. Besides, they won't stand fer it—Joe an' some o' them. They'd—why, the whole country'd ring with it—you takin' back the purse gran'dad give."

"You're a nice one to talk of disgracing the name! What else have *you* ever done? How many times have I paid your card debts and you drunk as an owl, days at a time? A credit you've been to the name! Better get back to the hills where you belong."

Shrinking before the scorn and rage in Ike's face, Pete crossed the yard to where his cayuse stood, mounted, and rode away. Beside the old graveyard he halted, his eyes on the fading inscription he could not read in the dim moonlight. He looked down at his old home, saw the lights, and heard the echo of merry voices. With bowed head he rode on. Ike was right. What had he been but a disgrace to the name? Only the sound of the horse's hoofs on the soft earth, and the rustle of the grass in the wind broke the silence. He talked to Pinto, plodding along.

"'Tain't as though he needs the money. Even then— He was always sayin' things about the purse after gran'dad died—always claimin' it was ours by rights. But I didn't think he'd ever do this. Mebbe I'd ought to go back an' talk to him again. He'd only cuss me, mebbe kick me like he did when I told him he'd branded Joe's horse. I been bad enough, but I ain't never stole—not even a stray off the hills if I knowed anybody had a claim on him."

Pinto, unguided, quickened his gait. Pete was trying to think in his fragmentary way. Several times he checked the horse; once he turned him back; then, driven by some helpless instinct, he cantered over the hills, and at dawn rode into River Meadow. The solitary valley was still in a thin half-mist, but the coming day was flinging fiery bands along the eastern horizon. A river murmured placidly through the meadow; the sweetness of pines and earthy odors was the vivid breath of wild places. Down on the river bank stood a cabin and a tumble-down barn, Pete's home.

SEARCHING the hills he whistled sharply, piercingly. The sound of flying hoofs broke the solitude. From the meadow, with the swift grace of the trained racer, and the sure foot of the range-horse, whinnying his challenge to the world, bounded a magnificent black stallion. His satiny coat gleamed through the dawn, his long mane and tail tossed in the breeze, as with feet scarcely touching the earth he came like the fiery spirit of some long dead chariot leader.

Pete's eyes were shining as he slipped from Pinto's back and waited. Whose hand but his, during four years of loving care, had nursed the sickly colt to this perfection? With a eager whinny Black Danger stopped beside the man, his pink nostrils quivering, nosing eagerly around the pocket of the faded coat. With a laugh Pete held the coveted lump of sugar toward the horse.

"You beauty! You sure *are* a beauty! No, Black Danger, only one lump. Other's fer Pinto. Got to be square, you know. Ain't I always told you that?"

The reproof in the voice was all indulgent pride as he watched the horse beside him. With lifted head sniffing the wind, with restless eye searching the far hills, the young stallion's finely poised body was charged

with power and virility. Clean-limbed, strongly built, he was a horse such as an indifferent herd may produce once in a century, as if Nature in one master stroke sought to atone for past errors and neglect. In the eyes of the man with the scarred forehead was the proud tenderness of mother love.

"You look like the old stock we used to have—that racer we got from Kentucky. They don't know out in the valley how you kin travel or they'd all be after you. But we're not givin' them a chance to know. We'd best be careful, boy. There'd be no more long night rides on the hills when we couldn't sleep. There's racin' blood in you. I know it. You could beat 'em all down there, I bet."

The fond admiration faded from his face, and the misery settled like lead around his heart. For the moment he had forgotten the purse, and the disgrace that was soon to come on the Ogden name. He moved closer to Black Danger and leaned his head against the firm neck. There was comfort in the warmth and strength, in the moist touches of the eager nose.

"Yes, I know, boy. You'd help me if you could. Guess we'll never see Gold Valley again. It's away back in the hills fer us, where we'll not meet any o' the old folks."

Suddenly he lifted his head, a breathless thought gripping him. He clasped the arched neck, laughing joyously.

"I got it! I got it, Black Danger. You're gonna win the Ogden purse. You'll do it, you gotta do it, boy! You'll leave Ike's horse in the shade. There's none of 'em kin beat you. Boy, boy, we'll do it, we'll win the big race an' save the purse. Nobody'll ever know about Ike——"

His hands clung to the mane, an icy thought clutching at his heart. With blanched face he whispered:

"No, I won't do it! I can't do it, not fer anything. Ike, he says I owe him money yet. He'll say you're his. He'll want you, an' he can't have you! I can't do it. I won't do it! I'm gonna keep you, boy. You're mine!"

He sank heavily down on the cold earth, and watched the east with heavy eyes. Pictures of the past rose before him, stray bits of conversation recurred. The cayuse browsed peacefully, but Black Danger, as though he sensed the struggle in his master's mind, pawed the earth uneasily. The shrill cry of wandering coyotes rang out, reverberated, and all was still again. Pete seemed to see a white head-stone with its fading inscription, could head his grandfather's words, "You're all the Ogdens that's left."

Long shafts of sunlight scattered the mist, sparkling on the rippling river, touching the rime-frosted grass to pearls. The brightness hurt Pete's tired eyes, thrust before him a bitter thought. He felt a moist nose against his cheek.

"It's today, Black Danger, today fer the big race. The Ogden purse——"

The whisper died away, and he hid his face against the smooth head.

THE Ogden race was scheduled for four o'clock that afternoon. The horses were gathering for the start when Pete rode over the hill and took the zig-zag trail down to the field. Black Danger, sleek and shining in the sunlight, every line quivering with life and power, tossed his head nervously at sight of the crowd.

In a glance Pete saw the same scene that had been enacted year after year ever since he could remember. Men rode importantly along the outer edge of the long stretch reserved for a track. Close to the snake fence Joe sat in his buckboard, surrounded by the poineers of Gold Valley. They were smoking, and no doubt speculating on the outcome of the Ogden Race. Groups of men watched the horses sidling toward the line.

Apprehensively Pete noted his opponents in the race. Stella May pranced under the skillful hand of Ike's jockey, gay in pink and green trappings; Queen Mab cantered evenly under the guidance of a slim young Englishman in chaps and spurs. There were other horses too, entered on the wildest conjecture as a possible winner of the purse. Pete caught his breath with a sick shiver of despair. What chance had he with his rangebred horse against trained racers?

"Black Danger, we gotta do our ——est!" he breathed.

There was a momentary hush on the field, an incredulous murmur that rose to a shout, and Pete felt all eyes upon him. He heard Joe exclaim:

"It's poor Pete! —— bless my soul! The boy's gone clean off his head!"

"Pete, you —— fool!" yelled Ike. "Go back with that horse. He's wild's as Spring rabbit. He'll fight, he'll kill some o' these horses. Want to break your neck?"

Pete, speaking gently to Black Danger, who was rearing and plunging excitedly, guided him toward the line. Even in his anxiety his heart beat with pride at the exclamations of admiration that broke from the crowd. Streaked with foam, keyed to the highest nervous pitch, Black Danger had never shown to better advantage. Ike snatched up a whip and started toward him, but Joe's voice rose above the clamor.

"Keep back there, Ike. Pete, boy, where'd you get that horse?"

"He's mine, Joe. I got him on the hills when he was a colt. I jest want to run him in this race."

"He's a humdinger, Pete. Pretty skittish, though. Better not, boy. 'Tain't safe."

"Joe, I jest gotta run him in this race. He won't hurt nobody. I've trained him good."

"I dunno, Pete. You sure he's all right? Looks like he might get so scared he'd throw you!"

"Joe, honest, if he acts up too much I'll ride him off the field. I ain't afraid. I jest want a run him this once, Joe, jest this once," pleaded Pete.

Joe turned to the excited men.

"Looka here, boys, I guess Pete knows his horse, an' you recollect there ain't a better rider in this country. Take him to the outside, Pete, then you kin swing off if he gets beyond you. Ike, you leave him be. Likely he won't ride far. Now, I'll be gettin' on to the finish. Mike McCarthy'll start 'em."

In his old buckboard Joe drove down the field, most of the crowd following and scattering at various points along the fence to watch the race. The other riders eyed Black Danger in curious admiration. Even in that oddly assorted line of horses he was distinctively different. He was heavier built than either Stella May or Queen Mab, but every ounce of weight seemed charged with resilient endurance.

Pete rode to the end place along the white mark that had been drawn across the field, the others sidling into position for the start. Black Danger tossed his head excitedly, making short quick runs back and forth, tugging with restive teeth at the bit. Glancing along the mile and a half-stretch of gently upsloping field, Pete rejoiced in the tireless strength the horse had shown on their long night rides. Above the finish, a hill curved. It was towards that goal he determined to ride.

At the crack of the pistol a cheer went up. Black Danger snorted, sprang quivering to one side, and turned toward the hill. Pete leaned low and spoke to him, unheeding the horses speeding down the track. The crowd jeered as they followed.

"Look out, Pete, you're liable to win!"

"My money's on the black!"

"Hi, Pete, goin' round by Klondike?"

Desperately Pete tugged at the bridle. His horse trembled and plunged. Wild cheering marked the progress of the racers ahead. At last Black Danger turned and tore down the field.

"Black Danger, come on! Show 'em, boy! Come on, Black Danger! ——, you gotta win!"

Perhaps the spirit of some racing ancestor awoke within the horse; perhaps he understood the entreaty in his loved master's voice. With strong swift strides he gained, and one by one the slower horses were left behind. There were two still ahead, the two on which Gold Valley was betting big money, the two whose names were on every lip. Slowly, so slowly to Pete's frenzied anxiety, Black Danger gained on Queen Mab till he was racing abreast with her.

Confusedly Pete could hear his own name in the cheers that swept the field. Now hope was surging madly, for they had passed Queen Mab, and like waves rose and fell the noise of the crowd. But still ahead that flashing pink and green! Those dark specks, that moving shouting blur—it was the mass of people at the finish! Leaning low on Black Danger's neck, he pleaded hoarsely:

"Come on, boy. Come on! You just gotta win! It's Ike's horse'll get the purse if you don't!"

The lean strong body responded, sprang forward till he was racing nose to neck with Stella May. Quick, under the spur of the whip, the mare shot ahead, leading by a half-length. But the joy of battle seemed to grip the black horse. He lunged forward, his stride lengthening, until he ran nose to nose with the panting mare.

Pete could see the flick of the merciless

whip driving Stella May over the rough ground, could hear the heaving breath of his own horse like a loud rushing wind. The end was close, close! Above, the hill curved, seemed to waver before Pete's burning eyes. And now, as in the old days, *his name* was ringing down the track as Gold Valley cheered Pete Ogden! His whole being seemed to lift with a new assurance. In a flash he remembered the signal of his night rides, how Black Danger loved and responded to the steep finish. He dropped the reins, waved his hat and yelled:

"The hill, boy! Now, come on, Black Danger!"

Did the horse realize that the cheers were for the rider he carried so gallantly? Did some instinct interpret the desperate message through the reins? Pete felt the lithe muscles tighten, saw the foam-flecked shoulders straighten. With a mighty spring Black Danger swept ahead of Stella May, up the slight incline, past the roaring crowd at the line, and on toward the hill. From afar off Pete heard the frenzied spectators shouting his name. There was a surging in his ears, a swaying before his eyes.

Straight for the familiar goal raced the black horse. With a magnificent leap he took a straggling fence. Cheers redoubled, women shrieked, but over the hill went Black Danger, and true to habit, slackened his pace on a level stretch.

White and shaken, Pete fell on his knees beside the horse, standing now with drooping head and heaving flanks.

"Black Danger, you done it, you done it! You saved the Ogden purse. Nobody'll ever know—about Ike. Oh, boy, boy, if you'd gone back on me! But you wouldn't, you wouldn't!" he sobbed, clasping convulsively the wet limbs.

Presently he took a dingy bandanna from his pocket, and with loving care wiped the suds that streaked the black coat. There was a tinge of red in the foam dripping from the mouth that pierced Pete like a knife.

"I hated to make you do it, boy, but it was the only way. A tough race, but you won it, my beauty, you beat 'em all down there—them fancy horses!"

A shout recalled him, and several men rode over the hill. He motioned them back, remembering that he must go down and claim the purse. When Black Danger lifted his head, and the labored breathing was easier, Pete swung into the saddle, whispering exultantly,

"We'll go get it, an' give it to Joe. There'll be the Ogden Race next year like always, an' you done it, boy, you done it!"

TALKING soothingly to the horse, dancing again with fiery power, he guided him to where Joe waited. The noisy, incredulous crowd scattered, standing back to watch the presentation of the historic prize. Scant as this ceremony usually was, this time it consisted merely in Joe's leaning out with the purse, and in Pete's snatching it as Black Danger careered past.

Clutching the worn trophy awkwardly, followed by tumultuous applause, Pete rode toward the corrals. Lord Penny hurried to the stables, and throwing open a door, pointed to a box-stall. Putting his old saddle-blanket over the horse, Pete started back, thinking only of leaving the purse safe in Joe's hands.

But as he left the corral, a group of cowboys met him, swung him to their shoulders, and carried him up and down the road yelling and singing. Finally, they deposited him beside Joe, demanding a speech.

The old man got to his feet, his face beaming under the old hat:

"Boys, I ain't never made a speech in my life, an' I ain't gonna impose on you now. But, by cripes, I gotta get this outa my system. I'm so doggoned proud to think a Gold Valley man, an' a Ogden to boot, won this race—not fergettin' to say 'twas a Gold Valley growed horse at that. Now, three cheers fer Pete Ogden!"

Again and again did Gold Valley ring with the hilarity of good will.

"Well, Ike," remarked Lord Penny jovially as they gathered round Joe's buckboard, "we didn't count on a new horse? Your brother beat us fair and square."

"Played the dark horse all right," returned Ike lightly, but he threw Pete a meaning glance.

A sinking sense of fear swept over Pete, and he scarcely responded to the vehement handshaking of the crowd swarming around him.

Again above the murmur of voices, he heard French Louie say to Ike:

"He —— good horse—Pete's black. Win all a money now. Next year I bet fer him."

"Don't be too fly about betting so far ahead," retorted Ike. "There's lots of good horses in the country. I've got a two-year old comin' on that sure *will* be a winner!"

Pete's heart beat with sickening apprehension. Suppose Ike came back next year with a horse that would win the purse! Then Black Danger's desperate race of today had only staved off the disgrace for a time. Something told him that Ike was but waiting a chance to demand the purse still in Pete's trembling hands.

What could he do? A wild desire came to ride off into the hills with it, but then Gold Valley would accuse him of trying to steal it. Through the groping confusion of his mind a big idea stood out distinctly.

"Joe," he whispered, "you take the purse, an' can't it be fixed up so nobody kin ever keep it?"

"Keep it! You're havin' a pipe dream, Pete. Nobody'd ever try to keep it. I'd like to see the son of a gun that'd try. We'd tar an' feather 'im."

How was the old man to know that his every word but added to Pete's helpless dread and fear.

"Joe," he whispered uncertainly, "I got to talk to you somewhere's about the purse."

The shrewd old eyes turned sharply upon the white face beside him:

"What's wrong, Pete? Got some kind of a card up yer sleeve? You kin always bank on me in any trouble, Guess you know that. Let's go on round an' have a look at that horse o' your'n. We gotta get cleaned up fer the dinner pretty soon. It's gonna be a big night, Pete."

THE long tables in the dining-room, glittering under the light of many candles, stretched through the halls into the living-room to accommodate the guests that sat down to the dinner that always followed the Ogden Race. Pete, still tightly holding the purse, looked dazedly at the chair to which Joe guided him. It was at the head of the table—his grandfather's old place!

But he felt somewhat assured when Joe took the chair on his left, after insisting that Ike take the one on the right. Pete stole a glance at his brother's face, but *he* was laughing and talking with the Englishman next him.

To Pete the dinner would always remain a blur of wild cheers and good will, but one or two incidents were stamped forever on his consciousness. That the crowd had toasted and applauded him again and again was as nothing as he waited in burning impatience for what was to follow.

Lord Penny, standing at the opposite end of the table, made a graceful speech in which he paid a glowing tribute to the Ogden name, and finished by proposing a silent toast to the memory of the founder of the Gold Valley Races—Peter Ogden. Every man was on his feet, Pete setting his jaws stiffly in the hush that fell over the room.

Joe's speech, delivered in characteristic language, was a series of forcible expressions, punctuated by vehement applause. He began by stating that Pete Ogden was formally handing over the purse to the Gold Valley Races. Here he was obliged to pause, for the men sprang to their feet with ringing cheers. Much more Joe had said, ending with words that Pete would never forget:

"I'll say this fer my friend here, Pete Ogden. He's as square a man as his grandfather was, an' more praise I couldn't give no man."

When order had been restored, the newly arrived Englishman stood up. He had been most interested in the history of the purse. If it would not be considered presumptuous, he wished to add another five hundred to the amount voted for the race, making the purse for next year a thousand dollars.

This brought Lord Penny to his feet to say that he would sign the deed giving the track forever to the Gold Valley Races. The natives were slower to respond to these proposals, seeming to watch Joe's lead. After an impressive silence, the old man stood up, and holding the Ogden purse high in the air he added:

"Reckon you've all heard what we intend to do. Any man here objects, or got anything to say?"

He waited, his square-jawed glance on the crowd. Pete stole a glance at his brother's face. It was white with a tense strained expression of baffled greed. He stirred uneasily, his glittering eyes on Joe's determined face. Pete's trembling hand touched Ike's, gripping the side of the chair.

Joe went on—

"The Gold Valley Races bein', I might say, an institootion, it's up to every dog-goned one o' you to make 'em next year the biggest we've ever had."

The Englishman was on his feet again:

"By Jove, seems to me there's another we ought to toast. Here's to Black Danger, winner of the purse, and may he win it again next year!"

When the cheers had died down Pete stood up, clinging to the edge of the table, a shrinking shabby figure:

"Here's to my brother, Ike Ogden—he's givin' the purse, too!"

Perhaps it was Pete's face, white and pleading, as he stood with his glass in his hand, that brought the men to their feet with a mighty response. The newer arrivals especially were enthusiastic, though the old-timers were slower to follow. A wonderful night for Pete! He was Pete Ogden again, not Poor Pete, as he had been since the beginning of his hard luck.

As soon as dinner was over, Ike, with much handshaking and rather forced jollity, announced that he was leaving to attend races in another town. Pete pressed through the crowd, and offered a timid hand to his brother. After a scarcely perceptible hesitation their hands clasped, Ike's face softening till he looked more like the boy Pete had played with long ago.

"Guess you were right, Pete. You've made me feel different somehow about things. Anyhow, it's a purse worth trying for now," he added, with a return of his old swagger, as he hurried out.

But when the evening's fun began, and the jingle of money in the card-room mingled with the laughter and music of the dance, Pete looked bewildered at the men crowding round him with offers to buy Black Danger.

Joe, his shrewd eyes dancing, urged him:

"Lord Penny's clean dippy about him, an' so's that greenhorn of an Englishman. Got money to burn—both of 'em! You'd get enough to buy a nice little place in the valley. Jest wait till the coin warms up on the poker, an' by cripes, I'll work it so's you'll get the biggest price was ever paid for a horse in these diggin's!"

Pete's eyes were roving the room, the faces of strangers that had warmed so genially, the hands of lifelong neighbors reached toward him. It was like old times when he was Young Pete!

"I gotta think, Joe," he returned. "I'll go out an' see to Black Danger now."

He stepped out into the cool crisp night. From the shed came a well-loved eager neigh. As he opened the stable door Black Danger rushed to him, quivering in the joy of his welcome, Pete stroked the smooth face.

"They all want you now! Sell you? I'd rather starve! We got all we want out at the cabin, eh, boy?"

As though in answer the horse lifted his head toward the hills and whinnied softly, eagerly.

"You're right, boy, we belong out there!"

In a moment he had saddled Black Danger, leaped upon his back, and was galloping toward the hills. There was a lightness in Pete's breast. He swept off his hat exultantly. They were going back to the cabin where all day the river ran joyously past the door; where the speckled trout leaped glistening from the water; where forgetting mattered not. On and on, cutting the cool fragrance of the starry night; back, back, into the silence of the hills, rode Pete Ogden on Black Danger.

THE RAT-TRAP

by Dale Collins

"IT'S good, very good of you, Peter," said Dave Davis awkwardly. He paused, then added with even more embarrassment, "After Millie—and all that!"

He looked at Peter anxiously, searchingly, in the flickering gaslight which seemed to accentuate the gloom of that little eating-room by the docks. He sought for some betrayal of a sinister motive, but Peter's face, brown beneath the battered cap, was not unkind, and Peter's tattooed hands lay calmly on the rough board table. There was a bigness about the sailor, a suggestion of great, broad seas which even to the little city rat, Dave Davis, carried a message of security and hope.

"Millie?" said Peter, as one who recalls a face. "Ah, 'er? I'd almos' forgot!"

But Davis knew he lied.

"I looks at it this ways," the sailor continued. "There was two of us, and she preferred you. That's 'er business, though to my mind she gotter mighty poor bargain." He looked upon Davis with open contempt. "Seein' now you've gone and done it, and the p'lice is after you, there ain't no reason why I shouldn't do you a bit of a turn, getting out of the country, like. If I was 'er I'd 'ave done with you long ago, but seein' she ain't, I'm doin' 'er a bit of a turn into the bargain. Y'are welcome."

He stretched his big arms to the dim-seen, dirty ceiling, and yawned. Davis, fumbling with his glass would have thanked him again.

"Y'needn't be makin' any more speeches," he went on. "Grab a boat and come out to the *Kismet* tonight. There'll be the tail of a rope over the side by the stern, and the hatch'll be loose so that you can scramble down into the 'old. If y'are caught, don't blame me or drag me into it; and if y'are not, I'll 'ear you tappin' three days out and when it can't do much 'arm, no 'ow. The Old Man'll be glad enough to 'ave you work y'way!"

He rose abruptly and without farewells, rolled out of the place, a great brown hulk of a man carrying his own world, his home, his all, with him about the Seven Seas.

And there crept into the ghost of a soul which was Dave's that it was a wonder Millie'd never taken to Peter, seeing what a capable sort of a fellow he was, and—all o'that.

He called for another drink and sat there sipping it and thinking over the interview with the cunning of a rat, seeking for a motive which would explain the surprizing behavior of his former rival.

"Supposin' that Pete was you and you was Pete—what would you do, Dave?"

The answer to this question which he put to himself was not satisfactory. He thought of many things which he would do in such a case, but certainly none of them ran in the direction of helping a man who was sought by the police to leave the country without a fuss. No, his nature would not lead him that way.

He nosed about in his mind, scenting a trap.

And all the time, running through the back of his disordered thoughts, was the picture of Millie, like a ray of sunshine. Millie, the big, buxom, loud-voiced wench of the Crossed Anchors Inn—the one gleam of romance in the lives of the big man of the sea and the little rat of Londontown. She was not the kind of girl who would appeal to most men; she was not refined; she was not cultured; but she had physical charm and a certain florid beauty, and she was their Ideal, which is all that matters. It would have been a rash and foolish act to try to analyze her defects for the benefit of either of these men. One would have been repaid with trouble for his trouble.

At the thought of leaving Millie, at the thought of leaving the familiar mean streets, at the thought of leaving the friendly "pub." and the football matches, the heart of Dave Davis was sad. And at the thought of the big, strange world to which he was going, and of the very whereabouts of which he was vague, the spirit of Dave Davis was afraid.

He sat there hesitating, doubtful, seeking for an excuse which would give him the right to put aside this chance of freedom. He longed to flee from opportunity with a coward's comfort.

Down the dark street outside came steady footsteps. Not the slow walk of sailormen, nor the shuffle of port loafers, but a steady, regular stride. Hastily Davis swung round with his back to the door, for his quick ears recognized the step as that of the Law.

The policeman passed, and waiting for a breath Dave Davis sprang for the door, his mind made up. Better to face anything than this eternal hunting. A rat pursued relentlessly by cats, Dave Davis went out into the cold night ready for whatever came.

THREE hours later in a stolen dingy he was floating down-stream, away from everything which in his own way was dear to him, and out into a dark world.

"It's very c-cold," said Davis to himself, and his teeth chattered.

The boat leaked, and the dark water was washing about his ankles. In his pocket was a loaf of bread and a bottle of water, and in his heart was fear. He had been unable to find oars and he was working hard in the effort to keep her head in the right direction by paddling with a piece of wood.

With satisfaction he realized that he was nearing the *Kismet*, for he had taken careful bearings of her position when he had first suggested his plan to Peter. The rusty red tramp on the left was just where she should have been, and the block of crazy warehouses on the right bank were also in the exact position.

Black fingers against the sky, the spars of the *Kismet* swam out of the night, beckoning him on.

Very cautiously he steered his craft toward her.

A curse parted his cold lips as he realized that there was much movement aboard. Desperately he tried to back-water until the time was more opportune. If he were swept past his chance of ever making headway against the current would be slight. The beads of sweat on his brow were colder than the sad wind which went weeping across the black water.

But he couldn't hold her back, and found himself swept under the shadow of the bark's squat bow.

Cautiously he let her slide along the side, fending her off with his hands.

Above there was the sound of hurrying feet, and the cry of excited voices.

"Murder! He's a-murderin' him. Grab the knife!"

He heard a hoarse yell escape from the open forecastle.

All the feet were hurrying forward, and he judged that the newly gathered crew were finding it difficult to be friends.

Through the woodwork he heard the sound of thudding blows and a body being flung against a bulkhead. Trembling, he pushed his cockle-shell along to be out of the danger zone.

"Good luck at last," he said to himself, for it was plain that all attention on board was centered in the storm which was raging forward.

His questing hands came upon the rope, and, floundering wildly for a moment, he found himself on the dark deck and saw his last link with the old life go bobbing away into the night.

Curses, yells and the sound of conflict floated down to him, but there was nobody in view. The hatch—where was it?

Peter had given his instructions carefully, and the city rat found his hiding-place quickly and furtively. Once his foot caught in a rope, and he fell with a clatter which would have been fatal in ordinary circumstances, but in the next moment he had lifted the corner of the unclamped hatchway and dropped a few feet into the hold.

It had been dark outside, but in there it was blacker than the Pit. The air was heavy and thick with dust. Beneath him were bags filled with cement he judged, and over them he crawled cautiously, fumbling blindly with terror at his heels. The journey seemed interminable, but it was vital that he should reach the darkest corner of all, lest there should be an inspection or inquiry following upon the discovery of that neglected hatch.

It was quiet as a doom. The clamor on the deck had been shut off. The world was taken away completely—all the familiar lights and noises of living were wrapped away in great folds of cotton wool. Davis had a sensation of suffocating—as if he had been buried alive.

"Ah, ——," he said. "Three days'll be ——"

Almost was he tempted to turn back, but on the deck above him he heard regular feet tramp by, and there was something of authority in their steady fall. Again the rat thought of the cats, and drew courage from fear.

He crept down into a crevice between the bags and lay very still. The moments went by on heavy feet. A great weariness came upon Davis, hunted for two long weeks, and he fell into sleep. Strange dreams crept into his mind out of the gloom—dreams of Peter, all red with rage, taking some terrible revenge upon him while he lay powerless. And always, seek how he would, the nature of that revenge would evade him, and he would be fumbling powerless in inky night.

He awoke with a start, hot and sick and lost.

He was conscious of motion though in that thick gloom there was nothing to indicate it. Bewildered he lay and gathered his wits about him. The whole black world was creeking and groaning and straining. There was a sound of mocking water heard dimly and afar.

Was he mad?

That was the first thought which chased through his blank mind. Gradually he realized that he, Dave Davis, was at sea—and not in an excursion boat—and that he was heading out to he knew not what. Also he was nigh to suffocation, and he was very sick.

He thought of hammering upon the hatch and seeking release, but caution warned him that it was a wiser thing to suffer a while longer and win the real reward. It might be that the ship had barely started on her voyage; he had vague ideas of pilots and—things; and Peter had said three days.

Miserably he turned and found sleep again, a sleep which was akin to unconsciousness.

Once he awoke with a start, oppressed with the sense that something had touched him. But all was quiet. He had a queer sensation of being watched, as if there were a host of things staring at him, unseen but seeing. His blood ran cold. But the ship was plunging madly now, and with a groan he blotted out his misery again in the blankness of sleep.

DAVE DAVIS woke with a start.

"What's up?" he growled. "What's 'appened? Hi, there, get off!"

Something was holding him down; something had gripped his legs in a grasp of iron; a great weight was on him.

Madly he struggled in the all-concealing dark, imagining for a breath that this was Peter come to kill him while he slept down there in the terrifying pit. But, of a sudden, he realized that this was no human thing which held him prisoner—that he was in the grip of something heavy, terrible, inanimate.

"Let go!" he screamed into the darkness, but there was no reply, save for the strange groanings and mutterings of the ship as she plunged into the giant seas.

Exhausted with his wild struggles and his panic, Davis lay still suddenly and collected his thoughts.

"Trapped," he said, "Trapped! The bags have shifted and I'm caught."

He wriggled his body shrewdly in an effort to scrape free, but the violent motion had wedged two heavy bags across his legs in such a way that he could not move the lower portion of his body and could not sit up to use his hands to any effect. The rat had been neatly trapped.

It came to him suddenly, then, that this was Peter's revenge; that in some way he had contrived that his rival should be pinned thus, and that he planned to allow him to starve to death down there in the darkness. It was all so plain, so simple, so easy. It was the very thing he himself might have thought of in a similar position —and he had walked into the trap with his eyes open.

He cursed Peter for his lying face that looked so open; for his cunning assumption of bluff good-will; for his devilish scheme. And bitterly he laughed at the picture of himself, the smarty, the quick boy, thinking that he had found a friend in his hour of need.

He lay still while he pondered over these and many things, but with a start he was brought back to his position. Again he had felt something touch his hand, but this time he was certain. It had been something warm and furry. He waited tense, and then, unseen, a warm body scurried across his chest. His strained ears caught the undertone of sharp chirpings which ran through the laborings of the ship.

Rats!

Prisoned there Dave Davis whimpered in the terror of a child.

"*Them* things—ah, God!"

His terror was that of a child—a fear born in almost forgotten times when he had lain in a dirty cot in a dirty room and fought off a hungry rat while his mother was out in quest of "a drop of comfort for her hard life." That rat had bitten a piece out of his tiny ear, and he bore the scar still. There was a deeper scar on his subconscious mind, but Davis was blissfully unaware of the fact that he possessed such a thing. Only was he aware of a wild fear of the scurrying things about him.

He knew now what had given him that impression of watching eyes, and he could sense all about him gray shapes sniffing hungrily at the bread in his pocket and ready to scamper down on him as his strength failed. He saw himself, weak and chained, fighting madly, blindly against their army, hemmed in on all side by sharp-teethed foes who saw him but remained unseen.

"Peter! Peter!" he screamed, and again, "Peter, you think you're a good 'un, you do, but if ever I get my hands on your throat you'll pay for this!"

The ship creaked, the rushing water laughed at him, and his sharpened ears heard the scamper of little cold feet on the bags about him—the feet of gray and hungry rats, a savage army of foragers drawn from the ports of half the world.

A little farther away from him he knew they had re-formed their lines and were sitting there sniffing with wet noses and twiddling greedy paws.

For all the things he had done and left undone Dave Davis paid in that black hole. Horror wrapped a blanket about him which was thicker than the darkness; his limbs ached until he cried out in agony, and his mind was bitter with dreams of revenge which could never come true.

He flung his arms out wildly, and something scurried from his moist hand.

He shouted to drive them off, to call assistance, but the only response was the dreadful song of his dungeon and the shriller war-cry of his torturers, and the only result was to make his throat dry and further reduce his dwindling stock of water.

He munched at a crust of his stock of bread, and even as he did so a rat hurtled out of the empty dark and snatched at the food in his very hands.

Madly he struck at it and hurled it away from him. Another thudded lightly on to his chest and he beat it off. In his panic the bread fell from his fingers and rolled down beside him. When he had recovered himself sufficiently to search blindly for it the crust had gone. To his tortured brain it seemed that he could hear the laughter of his enemies, as their sharp, cold teeth bit into his precious crums.

"What won't I do to you, Peter, if ever I gets out o' here!"

The words sang through him like a battle hymn; they kept him sane when he was on the verge of madness; they buoyed him up to keep awake, to fight his doom. But beneath them was another jeering voice which cried:

"Eaten alive, Dave! Eaten alive!"

FOR hours he suffered with no knowledge of time, with no knowledge of day or night. His eyes ached with staring into the gloom, and his being cried for sleep. He fought off his weariness, but no flesh could conquer such a

strain. After endless time he lost consciousness, only to be awakened by a stinging pain in his left ear. Something warm was trickling down his face, and he knew it to be blood.

Very close to madness was Dave Davis, then, for it was the same ear—the ear that bore the scar—and all the childish dreads came leaping back to be added to the real ones of the moment.

Again he broke into a paroxysm of struggling which was brought to a pause by a sudden hope. His toes projected through his worn-out shoes, and as he writhed they moved ever so little, and he felt them break suddenly through the texture of the bag which prisoned his legs.

"Now, Peter, you wait a while!"

He fancied that he saw Peter's face in the gloom, and there was a look of displeased surprize, of sudden fear upon it.

And Dave Davis knew why.

He could feel the cement trickling in a steady stream into his boot. Very carefully he worked his toes to and fro, and the rough hessian and those sharp grains broke through the skin and he felt the blood trickling down his foot along with the magic stream of freedom.

For a breath he was seized by a fear that the moisture might, by some mad chance, turn the cement hard and block the tiny opening.

But the flow went on. He forgot the rats and the gloom, and everything save the disappointment on the face of Peter. He worked with cold fury, driving his toes into the bag, through every movement sent a stab of pain through his aching muscles.

The rats were growing more daring. They scurried to and fro over him, but he did not allow himself to heed them. All his being was concentrated upon that steady flow of the strength of his jailer. With each pitching roll of the ship the stream ran faster and drifted away into crevices. He could move his feet freely again, and he forced them home, feeling the emptying bag above collapsing like a pricked balloon.

And Peter's face—that dim seen face he hated—wore a look of white terror.

Of a sudden, after he knew not how long, he found that with a mighty lunge of his feet he had cleared the lower bag away. It slipped from him into the emptiness of the dark. Aching in every muscle he struggled cautiously, and presently he felt the second sack which had gripped his thighs with iron hands moving uneasily. The ship gave a roll, and that, too, went from him and he was free—free and mad with wild delight!

"I'll kill you now, Peter," he yelled, but Peter's face had fled—the coward knew the reckoning was near.

Across the bags Davis crawled slowly and painfully in what he judged to be the direction of the hatch. Gray things fled from him as he went, but he feared them no longer. He had no fear of discovery, either. He had escaped from his trap, and that was the only thing in the whole world that mattered. They could jail him for as long as they wished, but the rats would not eat him alive!

An eternity of blind blundering, of slow progress flung hither and thither by the angry sea, brought him at last to the doorway to the world. Standing with difficulty, he beat upon the boards above until his hands were bruised and shouted till his throat was dry. And just when it seemed that so close to freedom he must fail there were sounds of unclamped iron, and men lifting a weight.

Dave Davis crumpled up upon the bags, and the crew, lifting back the hatch, let a bright shaft of gold down into the dusty hold—a bright shaft which fell like a blessing upon the huddled form with the blood-stained face and the bleeding feet, all whitened with the thick dust of the cement.

THEY picked him up and carried him out into the warmth of the sunshine, into the fresh breeze which raised the white pennants on the crests of the big, blue waves. They laid him down on the clean, white deck where the shadows of the sails and the spars and the ropes swayed to and fro across him.

He had the vitality of a rat, had Dave Davis, and presently with the glow of brandy warming his being and the breeze blowing the terrors from his brain, he sat up and looked about him.

"'Ere," said he, "'ow did I come 'ere?"

The captain, a round tub of a man looked upon him sternly.

"That's what we'd like to know," he said. "You're a stowaway, my man, and that means trouble."

It came back to him, then, and his eyes went questing among the group of men

about him for the face of Peter. But Peter, the coward, was not there.

The Old Man was puzzled by his glance and touched by his misery. He was not at all displeased with the appearance of the extra hand who would have to take what was given to him if he wanted to avoid trouble.

"He's not unwelcome," said the mate. "He'll make up for Peter!"

"True enough, I was thinking as much," said the captain.

But at these words a troubled look came over the face of Davis.

"Ain't Peter 'ere?" he asked hoarsely.

A light came into the face of the skipper.

"So Peter was the one who helped, eh? Well, I don't suppose it's any use bearing malice against him now. He's paid out, he is!"

And thereupon, Dave cursed him with a sad lack of discipline and called upon him to say what had come of Peter.

"You call me sir," growled the Old Man.

"I'll call you anything, sir! But where is he? Where is he?"

"Why, Peter—he was stabbed the night before we sailed by a Swede in a fo'csle row. We had to leave 'em both in hospital and sail two men short, curse them!"

Dave Davis sat there in the varying shadow and sunlight like a bewildered rat.

"I'll never know whether 'e meant it!" he whined, and bitterly. "And 'im 'ome with Millie!"

They laughed gruffly, and hustled Dave Davis forward to teach him how to work. And the tapering bowsprit pointed on to strange lands.

The rats gnawed at him still—the rats of eternal doubt.

WHERE MISSOURI GOT ITS NAME

by **Raymond W. Thorp**

QUITE a large number of historians and newspaper writers have taught the people to believe that the word "Missouri" as applied to our great river means "Muddy Water."

This is a very grave error, and the history of the way the bogus name came into general use may be thus briefly stated:

After the discovery of the upper or northern part of the Mississippi River by Marquette and Joliet at the mouth of the Wisconsin on June 17, 1673, these two explorers called the great river which stretched away hundreds of miles south to an unknown sea "Conception." Surrendering their frail bark canoe to the swift current of the broad river, now known as the Mississippi, they descended to the mouth of the Illinois; and then to the mouth of the Missouri, which Marquette named "Pe-kit-a-nou," an Indian name which means "Muddy Water." To this fact can be reasonably referred the popular error that "Missouri" means "Muddy Water."

The name given the river by Marquette prevailed until Marest's time—1712—when it was called "Missouri," from the fact that a tribe of Indians known as "Missouris," inhabited the country at the river's mouth, the same probably now embraced within the limits of Saint Louis County.

Missouri does not and never did properly mean "Muddy Water," but "Wooden Canoe." The name Missouris or Missouri was originally applied by the Indians living West of the Mississippi and along the shore of the Missouri. The term meant "the people who use wooden canoes."

The Lake Michigan Indians used birch-bark canoes, as did Marquette and Joliet in their descent of the Wisconsin to the "Conception," while the Indians on the muddy river used canoes dug out of logs, because the birch-bark canoes were too frail for the navigation of the turbulent stream.

The first reference to the Missouri tribe of Indians made by a European was by Marquette in a letter written in 1670 to La Mercier, his Father Superior, as Indians "who use canoes of wood." On Marquette's map appear the name and location of the "Ou Messoure."

FOILS OF FATE

by Ruland V.E. Waltner

MURDER and robbery had been done at the Forks, and the news spread through the sparsely settled backwoods like fire through dry timber. It bid fair to become a frontier mystery, but fate was disposed to make revelation. Toward Powersite hurried two of the least of the northland, and through them she was to play her hand.

The Indian, Siwash, secret as his forests, invincible in his hate as the mighty river that flowed through them, slid over the rough miles, finding paths where no path led, making speed that was born of the purpose in his heart; but when he reached the village, caution rose to equal his determination. No man in Powersite would have attempted the task he had set himself, but Siwash was not daunted. He would bide his time; and when opportunity offered, he would strike.

From the other side of the village, down from the hills, raced young Matt Powers, his team of half-broken colts taking the rutted roads at a furious gallop, his heart light and happy as the pale gold sunlight that flooded the Autumn woods. For the day he was free from his rough acres; his only serious purpose was to lay in provisions to tide him and his mother through the snowy Winter months.

With a flourish, he pulled up before Spivens' Emporium, Supplies for Man and Beast, and sprang to the ground before the worm-eaten hitch rack; and while he paused to pat the restless nigh horse, the dark shadow of Siwash flitted unnoticed around the side of the Emporium to a window at the back. The store was coming to life. All of Powersite's male population had drifted in, and the back window afforded an excellent place to see without being seen.

As young Matt dropped the halter over the hitch rack, "Pappy" Hendrix' voice drifted out to him, querulous with age and excitement.

"A thousand dollars reward, dead or alive?"

It was the mystery at the Forks they were discussing, and their talk hung around the meager details as flies to the sugar lump, returning time and again to taste of its sweet particles.

"Yeh," came Johnny Kline's answering growl, "but no one'll ever see it. No one but the cashier knew what the robber looked like, and he's dead. Besides, I saw *him* there that afternoon. You know who."

"You don't mean——"

Pappy Hendrix' gabble broke in midword as Matt opened the door, and the room drained to empty silence. Pappy and Johnny stared hypnotically before them, moistening their lips with nervous tongues; and their companions shrank from them as from something doomed and leprous.

Fat Pete sighed in audible relief.

"Why, it's only Matt Powers! You come in so quiet, boy, that we thought you was some one else."

There was a quick shifting back to normal, and Matt was greeted with overwhelming effusiveness. Accustomed as he was to the solitude of his little clearings and still boyishly diffident in the presence of his elders, he nodded and fled towards old Spivens, a cob-webby goblin in spectacles and knee-boots.

Pappy Hendrix stared after him, wrinkles of amusement around his rheumy old eyes. He understood human nature, did Pappy; and he translated it for his neighbors with malicious satisfaction.

"The boy's scared," he giggled, his corded neck jerking with mirth. "Ran at the very sight of us."

"Yeh," Johnny Kline agreed, stretching his great muscles self-consciously, "just 'cause a kid looks like a man's no sign he is one."

The words carried to Matt, and red stained his cheeks. Since his father's death, he had done a man's work and fought a man's battles; and if his heart was unconscious as a child's, his brain and brawn were a man's.

He turned toward the tables, but Spivens' bony hand clutched his arm.

"Matt," he said kindly, "before you were knee-high to a hoptoad you learned to let buzzing yellow-jackets alone. Course you could squash them, but I never know'd one worth the trouble. Now, what'd your ma mean about flour? I can't seem to make it out."

Reluctant, Matt picked up the list; and as he fingered it, half-minded to prove his manhood on Johnny's hulking body, a man pushed open the door and sidled into the room. He looked harmless enough with his stooped shoulders and weazened face; but with his advent, the fellowship of the tables sucked into the vacuum of fear; and when he lifted the wrinkled lids that drooped over his faded eyes and stared at fat Pete, the good-natured fellow shuddered and set out his drink in silence.

Caleb Stark emptied the glass at a gulp and turned to the group that circled the nearest table. The men made way for him in silence, partly through surprize at his joining them, partly through fear. There were tales that went the rounds of Powersite of the prodigious strength of Caleb's gaunt frame and the uncanny cunning that lurked behind his narrow forehead; and there were other tales, told in whispers and prefaced by the ambiguous "they say," for no man would take the responsibility of fathering them.

An unaccustomed smile stretched Caleb's thin lips. Dropping his saddle bags to the floor, he settled down in his chair with the peculiar immobility that was his, almost a suspension of breathing, and waited.

Every man at the table knew that he had joined them for a purpose. There was always a purpose behind any intercourse he held with his fellows. They too waited; and the silence deepened until Pappy Hendrix, whose tongue was supple as a woman's, could stand no more.

"Ye were to the Forks last week, eh Caleb?" he quavered, his watery eyes studying the lowered lids of his neighbor with senile cunning.

Not a muscle of Caleb's face moved, yet the men about him knew that he was aroused to alert and sinister attention.

"Johnny Kline said he seed ye," Pappy blundered from the safety of silence like the fear-driven partridge from the covert.

"Johnny Kline lied," Caleb said tonelessly.

Johnny gasped and struggled to his feet. He was jealous of his honor; and no man, not even Caleb Stark, could treat it lightly —before witnesses. Caleb lifted his heavy lids and stared at him. That was all, but Johnny dropped back in his chair like a sack of meal.

"Mebbe," said Caleb pleasantly, "mebbe, Johnny was just mistaken. But about that robbery at the Forks—there's a thousand dollars reward. I'd like mighty well to pocket it, but all they know is that the fellow's tall and that he carried off a bullet in his shoulder where the cashier plugged him. Now, Johnny here is tall, and he admits he was at the Forks when it happened."

Caleb sank lower in his seat apparently unconscious of the berserk rage that sent Johnny's chair hurtling to the floor as the big man tore off his coat and ripped the shirt from his brawny shoulders.

"There!" he bellowed. "Look 'em over and then we'll fight, you rat-tailed scorpion, you!"

The tiny muscles about Caleb's eyes contracted as they always did when he was about to strike; but he shook his head regretfully.

"Not today, Johnny. I'm feeling too good to go a-massacring you. Besides,

your gain is my loss. I'm out that thousand."

Johnny grunted, glad to appear mollified; for no one knew better than he that under Caleb's shell-like calm, he hid as swift and deadly destruction as the scorpion he had named him.

"I didn't come in here to start a ruction," Caleb went on. "I came in to get your opinion on this."

He plunged his hand into the wide flaps of his saddle bag and dropped a puppy to the table before them.

"Siwash Annie's," he explained unnecessarily.

The puppy spraddled his ungainly legs and swung about facing him, rumbling fiercely in his baby throat.

"Why, Siwash said he'd never let you have one of Annie's pups," Pappy gabbled excitedly.

"So I heard," Caleb answered in his even voice, "but I got my pick of the litter for fifty cents."

"How come?" Pappy quavered, as helpless in the grip of his curiosity as a chip in a spring freshet.

He had always wanted one of Annie's pups; but he had never had the five dollars Siwash demanded for the least of her progeny. And for fifty cents, Siwash, who hated Caleb as no white man dared, had given the best of her pups into his merciless keeping!

"That," said Caleb, "is a secret between Siwash and me."

A shudder passed over the group, dulling their admiration of the pup. There were secrets between practically every one of them and Caleb, secrets that they kept religiously and whose memory could bring them, sweating and trembling, from the deepest dreams. Now Siwash had such a secret, to be his companion as long as Caleb Stark should live.

Slowly, almost fearfully, they examined the pup. Characteristically short-haired and slate-colored, with wide-set eyes and long muzzle, deep-chested and big-boned, he gave promise of being the best of Siwash Annie's offspring. Still many a pup has been ruined in the handling, and Caleb Stark had never been able to keep a dog. He had had many, and some had died, and some had been slain for deserting him. Only one of all that long, sorrowful procession had escaped, a lowland hound who had slipped his leash while Caleb slept and returned to the farmer who had bred him. Caleb had sought him, over the Divide and back to the low country whence he came; and he had returned alone to wreak his balked fury on every living creature that crossed his path.

"Who's his pa?" Pappy quavered, wiping his bleared old eyes to study the pup better.

"What's the difference?" some one growled, for it was common knowledge that Siwash Annie had been mated with the only dog who had escaped Caleb Stark alive. "Siwash Annie's pups are always the same, the highest-hearted critters on four legs."

For the first time in their memory, Caleb Stark laughed. High, rasping, it cut the nerves raw. The puppy stiffened on his awkward legs and laid his soft lips along his baby teeth in a snarl.

"Don't you suppose I know all about him?" Caleb gloated. "That's why I bought him."

"He's a mighty likely looking youngster," fat Pete offered.

The puppy braced his legs more firmly and regarded him with unfriendly eyes. Caleb's heavy lids twitched; and so for a space they faced each other, Caleb Stark and the puppy whose sire had outwitted him. Spirit clashed against spirit, fearless and invincible. Then body met body. Caleb stretched forth his hand; and the puppy leaped to meet it, burying the needle points of his fangs in the thumb. He dared to hate even as Siwash did; but being young and inexperienced, he did not wait for opportunity.

Caleb's rage was terrible. He thumped the breath from the dog's body as he flung him against the table; and tearing the jaws loose, he up-ended the little animal and clamped his head and fore-quarters between his lean knees while his hand drove for his hunting knife. Almost with a single motion, the deed was done. There was a muffled yelp, a spurt of blood, and Caleb tossed the severed tail under the stove.

The men about them watched, incredulous and silent. Theirs was a code that would no more admit interference between a man and his dog than between a man and his wife; and the greater their fear of the man, the more strict their adherence to the code. Caleb knew this; and so he was unprepared for the hand that fell heavily on

his shoulder, flinging him back in his chair and tearing the pup from his grasp.

"If you're not all beast," Matt Powers' furious young voice rang on his startled ears, "get up and fight."

The thick lids snapped back from Caleb's eyes and points of flame burned through their deadness.

Matt braced himself for the fight. He had heard of the lightning swiftness with which Caleb could spring from immobility to deadly action and the serpent cunning that guided his sledge-hammer blows. In the natural course of events, he would have avoided Caleb; but he accepted life as he found it, without question or fear of odds, and Caleb Stark had flung a challenge to the very heart of him.

Caleb did not move. For a long minute he sat staring at the boy with his dead eyes with their thread of flame; then the flame died and a gray curtain filmed them; and still the boy waited, contemptuous and uncowed. Silence deepened in the room, and Caleb felt curiosity and expectation rising like a flood about him. He drooped lower in his chair, but the next moment he was on his feet, and there came the thud of his fist as it grazed the boy's body.

It was Caleb's custom to drop his man at the first blow, but Matt had been sidestepping even as he left his chair. His life in the open had developed a sixth sense that told him what an opponent was going to do even as the idea formed in the other's mind; and now it helped to even the odds against him. For the moment his youth and foresight held against Caleb's experience and strength; and the crowd hung on their swift charge and counter, too intent to notice the cautious opening of the door as Siwash sidled into the room. The big Indian watched, his face hard and still, his eyes aglow with triumph.

Caleb was pressing Matt, fighting with all the craft of a lifetime spent in the swift and terrible battles of the frontier. The boy gathered himself for a supreme effort. Caleb's eyes grew duller and the gray curtain dropped, filming his exultation. If he could be brought to rush, then would come the quick jolt to the jaw and oblivion. He maneuvered for position, crouched and waited. As the boy swung in, Caleb's fist leaped to meet him; and then——

A soft body hurled itself against his feet, sharp young teeth fastened in the leather thongs that bound his leggings; and from near the door, rose a guttural laugh. Siwash's laugh!

Rage—blind, unreasoning, and devastating—held Caleb's blow while his foot shot out and swept the pup from his path; but in that moment, Matt found his opening. His fist drove to Caleb's jaw, all his outraged heart behind it. The blow lifted the man from his feet and dropped him to the floor as limp and unconscious as the bob-tailed pup.

The circle closed about him, laughing and jeering; for no man is so friendless as a fallen king; and none so brave as he who has dwelt beneath the heel.

Pappy Hendrix kicked at Caleb contemptuously and Johnny Kline spoke condescendingly to the victor; but Matt Powers turned to the bob-tailed pup.

"How much did he cost Caleb?" he demanded thickly.

Pappy Hendrix giggled.

"Fifty cents and a beating."

Into their midst, pushed Siwash, his dark face glowing, his hands outstretched for silence.

"For fifty cents, he stole him," he said in his guttural English. "I return his fifty cents to the thief and give the dog to you."

With a swift gesture he bent and dropped a half-dollar into the fallen man's pocket.

"The thief, he stole him and I prove it."

He rose majestic, and before their wondering eyes methodically stripped the shirt from his back.

"I, Siwash, was in the bank when the robber entered. I, Siwash, run away and hid behind the bank. He, the thief, found me and said I robbed and killed. See."

He turned his shoulders to them.

"They are clean. He said he let me go because I'm no 'count-Injun," Siwash spoke proudly, "and he wanted Annie's pup. I say he's 'fraid. He wanted to use Siwash. He took Annie's pup and left me—money—fifty cents."

The Indian bent again and flung back Caleb's coat, exposing a dull-red stain.

"Blood," quavered Pappy Hendrix. "You didn't hit him hard enough for that, Matt boy."

"Course not," scorned Johnny Kline. "I said I seen him at the Forks. He killed the cashier."

"He killed," Siwash agreed gravely as he tied the fallen man's hands and feet. "He rob Siwash of his pup and try to make him no 'count-Injun. We got him." He nodded to Matt. "We take him back to the Forks."

With a single movement, he flung Caleb's limp body over his shoulder and strode out of Spivens' Emporium. Fate had played her hand, and the Forks murder was no longer a mystery.

PUSHING THE LIMIT OF ENDURANCE

***by* Josiah M. Ward**

HOW near to death by injuries can a man of ordinary physical capacity approach, endure and enduring, survive?

A peculiar question which requires concrete illustration for answer. The best field for these illustrations lies in the Far West, of the prairies and the Rocky Mountains before the coming of civilization and doctors; and best among the trappers of this field.

Take the case of Thomas L. ("Pegleg") Smith. He was trapping with Jim Cockerel, when, by some mischance, he fell off a cliff and broke a leg. It was not an ordinary break. The leg was so badly fractured that the bone was crushed and jagged parts of it protruded through the flesh and prompt action was necessary to prevent blood poisoning, or gangrene.

They had a three-cornered file and with this tool Cockerel made a saw out of a butcher knife. He cut the flesh with Smith's hunting knife, sawed through the bone and tied up the arteries. Smith recovered and going to St. Louis purchased a wooden-leg—hence Pegleg—and thereafter achieved fame as a guide, trapper and road ranch keeper.

Probably the most remarkable instance of vitality on record—and it is recorded and avouched—is that of Robert McGee, a lad, in 1864. The emigrant train of two wagons with which he was traveling across the plains to Colorado was attacked by Indians, the men killed and the women taken away as captives. McGee and another lad tried to escape by flight. Chief Little Turtle shot him in the back with a bullet from an army revolver, and dismounting from his horse, scalped and mutilated him. Perceiving that his victim was not yet dead, he drove two arrows into McGee's quivering flesh, and then pinned him to the earth with a spear. Other Indians, as they passed, thrust knives into him and speared him with lances.

The other lad fainted at the outset and was less savagely treated—McGee survived and grew into manhood. His companion in misfortune survived for one day.

The case of Baptiste Brown, Canadian French and famous trapper after whom Brown's Hole, or Park, on the Green River, in Northwestern Colorado, was named, illustrates the experience of many of these hardy sons of the wilderness. He was riding a strong fast horse on a round of beaver traps when he beheld, at no great distance, a party of Blackfeet Indians on the war-path. As they were only armed with bows and arrows he thought it an easy matter to escape by flight. He was chuckling to himself over thus saving his scalp when he came to a narrow but deep gorge which cut directly across the line of his flight.

The Indians were too close for any maneuvering on Baptiste's part. His only chance of escape rested in the ability of the horse to jump the gorge.

The horse tried the jump and fell short. Into the gorge went both. The horse was killed, Baptiste was hurled into unconsciousness. The Indians saw him where he lay, but could find no ready way to reach him. They rode away disgusted at the loss of a coveted scalp.

Baptiste was not killed, but both his legs were broken. He lay there helpless and burning with fever until the next day when trappers following the trail of the horse found and rescued him. His bones were set as well as the rude surgery of the trappers could serve and, strange to say, perfectly set. But for two months he had to be hauled around a rough, unbroken country in a litter strung between two pack animals.

"*Sacré enfans des grace!* Keel 'em all!" was ever after his exclamation when Indians were mentioned.

HURRICANE WILLIAMS' VENGEANCE

A Four-Part Story Part 3

by Gordon Young

Author of "Horrezko," "Wrong Blood—Strong Blood," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

IT WAS not quite by chance that McGuire and Delaney met Pete Mathers. They found him lying on a mat in the shade of a breadfruit-tree. He was quite drunk.

McGuire and Delaney offered him one hundred dollars to take them to an island in the Solomons and, because Mathers needed just that sum to buy a native girl, Mathers agreed to give them passage.

"I'm not leavin' for three or four days," he said. "Be back here tomorrow or the next day."

But McGuire and Delaney put no faith in the gross man and smuggled themselves on board the *Jack and Jill* that day. They hid in one of the cabins and so witnessed the cold-blooded bargaining of Mathers with Buli for the girl A-Ina.

That same afternoon Mathers sailed.

A little later the two men emerged from their hiding-place and prevented Mathers from abusing A-Ina. They made Mathers a prisoner and took command of the ship.

Mathers, fearing for his life, confessed the true story of the attack on the *Good Shepherd*. He told how Slade Willerby's men, impersonating Hurricane Williams and *his* men, had attacked the mission ship, brutally killing the bishop and his followers—men and women. Falsely accused of that evil deed Hurricane Williams had been outlawed and a price put upon his head.

"Why did Willerby do it—the *Good Shepherd?*" McGuire asked.

"I'll tell you. The missionaries always fought hard against the Willerbys, an' Bishop Johnson led 'em. Slade said: 'We'll just put an end to this old church meddler, and make it hot for that blasted Williams, too.' But it was Terry Rand that showed him how to do it. It was Terry what played you. McGuire."

"After I have met the gentleman he may not care as much for the part," McGuire murmured mildly.

The course of the *Jack and Jill* was now set for Bakari—Hurricane Williams' headquarters.

The Kanaka crew accepted the new order of things, but it was obvious that, should Mathers appear, they would rally to their old captain. Consequently Delaney and McGuire kept watch and watch. It is well they did so for Mathers managed to escape from his cabin, and persuaded the Kanakas to rush McGuire. But that man was on the alert, and the attack failed.

About the middle of the afternoon McGuire saw a high-stemmed war-canoe coming for them at a speed that caused the water to fly from the bow. Almost at the same time another canoe glided from behind a small island ahead.

The natives had seen the ship, and maneuvered to approach it from two directions.

THE natives proved to be friends from Bakari and, in a little while, the *Jack and Jill* was safely at anchor.

La Salle, a young naturalist, greeted them. He had been brought to the island by a Captain Douglas. From his description of the man, Delaney and McGuire knew that Douglas was really Hurricane Williams.

La Salle told the two men of a trip to the island of Kakarutu.

"There was a ship at anchor there," he said. "She was badly smashed up. The captain was badly frightened. He offered me two hundred pounds if I would take him away."

A strange, savagely beautiful woman and her daughter, Doris, lived on the island. The woman—her name was Lania Du Beque—was very sick, and fearing that she would die and leave her daughter at the mercy of her foes—Slade Willerby and *all* men—had told La Salle the story of her life.

"Doris' father's name was Stanley," she said.

"He was hanged for a crime he did not commit. But if he were alive today he should never know that Doris is his daughter. He would hate her because—I am what I am."

She concluded—

"And I want you to promise that when your Captain Douglas returns, you will bring him here that he may take us away."

This story of La Salle's gave McGuire and Delaney much food for thought. They knew that Lania Du Beque had been the wife of Williams, and that Doris Stanley was his daughter.

The next few days were dull and uneventful. Delaney, McGuire and La Salle passed the time fishing; A-Ina—Delaney had announced that she was his wife, to save her from the Bakari islanders—had made friends with girls of the island and was quite happy; Mathers was kept in close confinement.

Then came word that a ship was on the reefs and that another ship, aided by natives hostile to Bakari, was attacking it.

"That's Williams on the rocks," said McGuire, "and the other one that's after him must be a Willerby ship."

Then to the island chief he said:

"Marugi, call up your men. Out with the canoes. Send word to all your villages to get out their boats and follow us."

So, by clever and much hard fighting, the rescue of Williams was effected, but the Willerby brig made good its escape.

Later that night McGuire told Williams of the woman Lania Du Beque. But it took all of his courage to speak of Doris Stanley—Williams' daughter.

"She is dead," said Williams. "I have seen her grave—knelt there—put flowers there. I carved her name in the stone that's there."

VII

AT A cloudy dawn the village of Bakari was aroused by shouts and clamor. Men who had gone late to their mats groped for weapons and dashed out, thinking that an enemy was upon them. Children and women began scuttling into the bush, but presently noticing that there were no strange voices amid the shouting, paused and cautiously returned.

Williams and McGuire had come; and Marugi, being brought up from his sleep and told that Williams wanted to go to Kakarutu at once in the largest canoe, one that would bring back as many people as a man has fingers on his two hands, had sounded an alarm as the quickest way of bringing out his warriors.

"The tide will be rushing out to meet us!" a man protested.

"Fool of dog," cried Marugi, "what cares Illum for the tide!"

And the canoe swept out, with Marugi at the steering paddle.

As they passed the *Islander* shouts were exchanged, and Delaney waved at them. Canoes would come out presently and yank the *Islander* into the lee of an islet, then her decks would be black with men throwing over her shell. It would have to be fished again, and much of it would probably be lost; but Williams wanted the ship ready for the run to Willerby Island as soon as he returned.

McGuire had suggested that they use the *Jack and Jill*. Williams would not have it so. He knew the *Islander* as a man knows his own palm, the weight of his own fist. The *Jack and Jill* was a strange schooner, and small.

The canoe had no sooner got out to sea than it was hit by a squall, and was tossed and dropped like a match-stick; but she headed into it for an hour-long struggle against the wind and curling waves. The squall passed, but the clouds gathered themselves into black lumps that were split by lightening, and thunder rumbled like sky-beasts, growling before they leaped. The rowers became uneasy. They glanced about anxiously toward Williams, and not once saw his eyes even turn toward the heavens. This reassured them a little. McGuire, sitting in the bottom of the canoe, leaned against a seat and smoked a cold pipe. The rain had wet his tobacco and matches.

They went on. Squall after squall raced on them and passed. The sea grew higher, the heavens more dense and black. Thunder crashed. The storm broke.

The frightened rowers fought to keep headed into the sea, and often their paddles fanned the air as they struck at water. The canoe was as light to the touch of the waves as a shell; and now the bow would be in the trough of the sea, now the stern, as if standing on end, and the rowers were shaken back and forth on their seats. Some among them howled. Marugi himself was full of fear, but he was a chief and would not show it. McGuire bailed rapidly.

One broadside sweep of a wave and the canoe would have spilled them like nuts from a trough.

At a word from McGuire, Tam and another man brought their paddles in-board and began bailing.

Then Marugi's paddle snapped where it had been carved too deeply at the neck of the blade. Williams seized one and thrust it over the side; and so they fought, reeling from side to side with the roll of the canoe, swayed back and forth with its pitch, now raised as high as a wave could reach, now dropped between waves that would have drowned a city. Williams shouted at them, calling up a courage they did not know they had, promising—as if he held the secrets of the storm—that they were safe. And they were.

With tropical rapidity the clouds pressed on, moving in a dark mass across the jungle-fringed sky-line of New Georgia, and leaving only long, thin wind-blown stragglers overhead. The wind died out, the sun beamed as if with a freshly-washed face. The sea ran high and the rowers were tired; but they were moved to the depths of their superstitions because at the very height of the storm Williams had firmly assured them that they were safe.

They had been blown from their course, but tired as they were they settled down to powerful stroking and took up a chant. The sea died down.

They shot through Kakarutu's mouth with a rush and a shout, as became men who had beaten the storm-devils; and the storm had delayed them until the tide was right. This, however, they put down to the presence of Williams, more than to the delay.

The two boats were at the foot of the trail that led down from the cliff; the *Ballagat* nestled against the rocks, and a man came out on deck and stared at them. He shouted, but was not answered.

The canoe came to the ledge where the upward trail began.

Williams and McGuire got out and climbed up. Many of the natives followed to rest on land after the weary pull. At the top of the cliff no one was in sight. McQuire told the natives who had followed to give a shout. They did; and presently men with cloth draped around their hips and glistening necklaces of sharks' teeth came running out of the bush with rifles in their hands. They stopped at a distance and stood with the guns in menacing readiness.

Williams walked toward them, and addressing the leader said—

"I am Captain Douglas."

Areko looked past him and doubtfully at the Bakari men.

"My men came through the storm, and are tired."

Men of different tribes and islands mix and mingle in about the same way as rats and cats, except at plantation work, or on ship board, where, though they may keep to themselves, they seem to forget their feud.

AT THAT moment La Salle came hurrying from the foliage that overhung the path. Doris Stanlea was with him. She stopped some thirty feet away, looking from the naked cannibals near the edge of the cliff to the white man La Salle approached.

He came up eagerly and greeted Williams and put out his hand, then became aware that Williams was staring steadily passed him and at the girl. La Salle looked about in sudden uneasiness. After all, he knew nothing of this man, and his rigid body, the tense fierce fixed gaze, with something in it very like hunger, gave La Salle a sense of alarm.

She too saw his eyes, felt them, and stared uneasily at him.

McGuire saw that she was a young girl of astonishing beauty, graceful, with the poise of refinement in her bearing; and with something attractive in her face that was not mere beauty.

"I say, Captain Douglas—I say it was fine, *fine* of you to come—" La Salle could not help a little nervousness— "and I had no way of letting you know; but we—we have decided to *stay* here. Be sort of Crusoes, you know. I like it here. We have decided that——"

Williams did not appear to have heard.

McGuire caught at La Salle's arm, pulling him around.

"Keep quiet!" he said with unexpected firmness for one of his lazy manner of speaking; and this increased La Salle's suspicion. Over and over Lania Du Beque had expressed uneasiness about what type of man Captain Douglas might be.

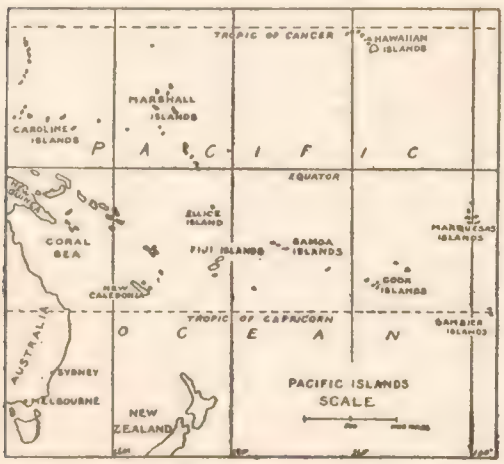
"But McGuire, look here——"

He broke off, turning around, watching Williams who had stepped forward and was walking straight to the girl. The Kingsmill savages looked doubtfully, but let him pass. He did not see them.

As he neared her Doris took a step backward and stopped. His eyes frightened her. Bare-headed, half-naked, blackened, he looked more like a savage man than those

natives about her with their sharks' teeth necklaces; but it was the terrible intensity of his gaze that gave her fear. Yet she was fascinated even in the midst of her uneasiness.

"McGuire! What is he going to do?"



"Kiss the ground at her feet!"

"Let go!" La Salle jerked, but did not break away. "I won't trust him—we'll stay here."

"Be quiet, La Salle. Or I'll break your ear-drums with a word."

The strangeness of his tone caused La Salle to glance around incredulous and mystified at McGuire.

"But the way he's looked at her, McGuire. I don't like it."

"You may know bugs, La Salle. You don't know men."

"What do you mean? I saw how that man——"

"That man, La Salle, is Clive Stanley—who was hanged!"

"My God—impossible!"

"Don't be afraid. He isn't going to tell her. Not now!"

"*But he was hanged!*"

"After sundown. His neck wasn't broken. The doctor didn't want to miss his dinner and hurried off. The convicts saw he had life in him and in the dark buried a sack of oakum instead of a man. There he is!"

La Salle stood as if frozen by the chills that danced through his body, and looked toward Williams.

Doris began to feel that he was not going to speak to her, he stood so long just looking at her with a gaze that seemed like fire; but when he did speak his words amazed her, they was so unlike his manner, his appearance. And she was suddenly without fear, though still disquieted, vaguely troubled; she knew that he was reassuring her, but, his reassurance was deeply disquieting because of the strangeness in the way he spoke and what he said.

"Years ago a child went out of my life like a candle in the wind, and you are like what I have thought she would have been. While I live you need have no fear of any man."

"I have no fear, Captain Douglas," she said quietly but amazed. She thought him mad.

She wanted to say that she was sorry, sorry because of the little girl he had lost; but she did not understand the intensity in his expression that was to her perception like fierceness; and it troubled her, as it would have troubled any girl, that his manner and words were so strange. She felt that she should thank him; but other feelings about him confused her though she continued to meet his gaze that was sharp as the edge of steel.

"No, you would have no fear. You believe in God and——"

"Don't you?"

"I begin to."

Now she was sure that he was mad.

After a moment of silence he turned away abruptly, with a suddenness that was like a jerk.

"McGuire. La Salle," he said.

They came to him, La Salle looking very like a man that was partly in a trance.

"La Salle, you will stay here and see that there is no trouble between the natives."

"Yes," said La Salle, who knew that it was merely an excuse to have him remain. "Areko, you will take Captain Douglas to the house."

He looked toward the girl, about to ask her to remain, feeling that she should too be out of the way of the meeting. But she had already turned to go.

She went ahead, Areko just behind; Williams and McGuire followed in silence.

As they came into the small clearing before the house, McGuire saw a woman raise up on the swinging couch under the thatched porch and stare at them.

Doris ran quickly to her, saying—

"Captain Douglas has come."

Lania Du Beque without taking her eyes

from the approaching men got from the couch, her daughter helping her. Then she cried out, and reeled. Areko jumped to support her.

"Mother!"

Doris glanced hastily and in doubt at Williams, who had stopped and was strangely unmoved by her mother's pain.

"I am all right—now," said Madame Du Beque, stiffening and desperately getting control of herself.

"But, mother!"

"It was just pain, pain. I—go, Doris. Areko, go. I must speak to Captain Douglas alone."

She pushed at them with her long thin hands and did not take her eyes from Williams.

"I can't leave you, Mother."

"Go!"

McGuire had already turned and was moving off with an air of wandering absently. Just as he was leaving the open space, cleared of the trees and heavier growth by the Kingsmill boys, Doris came up quickly from behind. She had come after him.

"Who is that man? I am sure my mother knows him. She has been better. It wasn't her illness now. Who is he?"

She glanced backward toward Williams, then looked sharply at McGuire, who searched for his pipe. But his pipe was not to help his ease of manner this time. He had lost it from his waist-band.

"Captain Douglas? Oh lots of people know him by sight."

"Something is wrong. I feel it. I can see it. You are being just evasive."

"No I am not. No. I'll tell you about Captain Douglas—why he doesn't look like other men."

And McGuire, using the name of Douglas, began a tale of Williams' shipwrecks and fights, of his manner of courage, his audacity and fierce sense of justice; so that she, who had meant only to speak to him for a moment, stayed to listen.

VIII

LANIA DU BEQUE was a woman of courage, self-control and experience. In her life she had never felt but two really deep emotions, and one of these was the fantastical love for a daughter whom she hardly knew, but which had become almost a mania; the other was dread of Clive Stanley, ghost or man. Years before she had learned with terror that he was not dead; that he was Hurricane Williams.

Her victims were many, for her beauty—and that something which lies beyond beauty and gives it witchery—was great; and in the hot South Seas islands where passions are deadly and lives cheap, she had played recklessly, proud of an evil power that had not seemed to her at all evil. She was thrilled by one passion after another, and as readily tired as thrilled. She had not been deliberately cruel, but utterly heartless; and had thrown broken men away as a wealthy child discards broken playthings.

Then came the time when a young boy sought her to kill her because of what she had done to his brother; and she, half-infatuated by the boy herself had nearly seduced him into loving her. This had so aroused a savage little native girl that she jealously threw herself knife in hand at Lania Du Beque.

This native girl had been one of Hurricane Williams' pearl divers; and it was then that Lania became aware that the vague and disquieting rumors were true, and that Clive Stanley was not dead. She had stood before him, wounded, scarred, disfigured; and with cold scorn he had faced her, content that her punishment was as great as punishment for her could be, at least on earth.*

Willerby had been near at hand, and in the attack that followed he was blinded. Their afflictions had bound them together in a relation that was more like a quiet, true love than either had ever experienced. Willerby, brooding in his blindness, had become almost insane, had periods of storming about in a rage, calling down curses upon Williams; and at such times he would charge his son never to rest until Williams was caught—and blinded.

Lania on the other hand, without growing religious, had become almost superstitious. Her beauty being destroyed she felt shame instead of pride, and though she did not advance so far as downright repentance, she almost regarded her disfigurement as a sort of atonement. There was nothing of the broken and contrite heart about her; she was changed, but unhumbled, and unrepentant except in so far as she now had

*These incidents entered into the story "Savages," published serially in *Adventure* in 1919.

the quite superstitious dread that she was to be further punished by some misfortune to her daughter.

She waited with rigid calmness until all had withdrawn beyond hearing, her fingers with the unconsciousness of habit covering the scarred side of her face.

"You!" she cried, not in surprize but protest. "You! Why of all the men in the world would it have to be you!"

He spoke coldly—

"The affairs of men are in the hands of God."

"You—you the infidel, to speak of God!"

"Have you suffered so little, madame, that you still doubt?"

"Having seen whom I am, you know that I will not go in your ship. Not if I were adrift in mid-ocean. No!"

Madame Du Beque was too old for tears, no longer beautiful enough to plead; she was wise enough to know that no show of weakness in herself, nor any plea for mercy, would move him. And though she had a terrible dread of him, she was almost—not quite, but almost sure that he would not use violence toward her.

Still, because she was a woman, and moreover because she believed it true, she said, though at the moment erect and firm in her bearing:

"I will remain here. I have not long to live. My health is gone. Take away your friend La Salle, and that old scoundrel Miller. My boys will stay with me, and that young lady you saw—she is a girl that I adopted years ago, and loves me like a daughter——"

She showed extreme agitation in spite of herself and reached toward the back of a chair for support.

"—so you may leave the island at once, Captain—Douglas!"

"You may remain or go, as you please. But my daughter goes with me."

"*Your daughter!*" cried Madame Du Beque with every line and shade of an incomprehensible amazement so perfectly drawn that any man but Williams might have doubted.

"My daughter," he said in a hard, even tone.

"Never! I would have strangled a child of yours!"

He answered with a look that made her tremble—

"Yes, you are capable of even that."

Madame Du Beque sat down weakly, but did not lower her head. He remained standing and did not move.

"And *you!* You will say to her, 'I am Hurricane Williams who murdered missionaries on the *Good Shepherd!*' "

"No. It is you who will say that, though you do not believe it."

"I do. It is true. You were recognized."

"I was impersonated."

"By whom?" she asked with assumed scorn and doubt.

"By your friend, Fellowe."

"Ah!"

The exclamation escaped her, and she looked at him a little dazed. Williams never lied. That was one of the things that made him terrible. Then:

" 'My friend'—you hint by that that I helped? That I knew of it? Assisted with the plans?"

"Madame, this slashing of words between us is useless. When you in desperation protected—Doris from Willerby——"

"Ah that scoundrel La Salle has told you everything! I might have known! You can trust no man!"

"What you did was insane and desperate, madame, but it was noble——"

"You forgive me! You do forgive me?" she cried, bending forward with every appearance of eagerness. "Oh how I have suffered, you can never know how I have suffered! And when you let them hang you—Clive Stanley, I knew then what it was to love a man! Oh I prayed for——"

"Quiet!" he said with harsh impatience.

Madame Du Beque, failing—as even she had known she would fail—to move him, sat back and a hard look came into her eyes, as she asked,

"Are you going to try to make Doris believe that you are her father?"

"Are you going to say that I am not?"

"Before God, Clive Stanley, I will swear it with my dying breath! I have supported and protected that child from infancy. I have told her that her father was a worthy, fine man who is dead. I have been a woman without shame to get money that she might have wealth, and now that she is grown, you—you who live with cannibals and look like one, you want to claim and take her from me! Never! Nev——"

She broke the word and shrank back, her lips parted in fright, afraid of the fierceness that had leaped into his face. For a time

he stood tense as a man who stands locked motionlessly with an enemy, when the one that moves will be the first who dies.

"He will kill me!" she said to herself, but she could not move or cry out.

Finally he spoke, but what he said was:

"Come with me. We are leaving the island, now."

A sensation of vertigo came over her. She knew that in those few moments of silence he had looked at and thrown aside all the ways of revenge that suggested themselves. She hated him and feared him more than any man, which was natural since he was the one she had most greatly wronged; she hated him because he knew her through and through, so that there was not a shadow of deception in her that he could not detect, and because of the cold and impenetrable scorn that stung as if her naked body were covered with nettles.

There was, too, something about him that could not be resisted. Her strength against his strength was like a sword of brass against one of steel; and this strength angered her because it was neither cunning nor violent; it was sheer stark will.

With frantic rapidity thoughts swept through her mind. She might refuse to go. She might call to her islanders to kill him. She might tell her daughter the truth, and know that Doris would choose to live on with her mother in this isolated place rather than accept this fierce strange man as her father. But she was afraid of him.

With an air of complete humbleness she said—

"I will go with you."

And by the look he gave her she knew that he distrusted even her submission.

IX

AN HOUR later when Doris next saw Williams she looked at him with a new and nearly kindly interest; his strange appearance and the intensity of expression seemed understandable. McGuire, too subtle to seem to praise Williams, had told of his courage and daring in what appeared to be a simple matter-of-fact way. In hearing of Williams she had been fascinated by McGuire's ease of manner, his quiet, soft-spoken, almost lazy flow of words, so that when he had finished they were sitting cross-legged, face to face, on plaintain-leaves from which he had shaken the moisture and spread thickly on the ground for her.

Of course McGuire had not interested her in anything like the same way that she had been interested by La Salle's presence and conversation. She loved him, and she knew it; which shows that in such matters women, even those newly from a convent, are wiser than honest, modest men, for La Salle was still in doubt in this matter, which troubled him greatly.

He, being an honest, thoughtful man, had disputed with himself as to his right to try even to get her love, since he was in a way to be her protector, her guardian; and she was so utterly innocent of the world that, he said to himself, she hardly knew one man from another. It was very near to taking an unfair advantage.

But he was so completely in love with her that, so he thought, he would almost prefer to remain on this little mushroom of an island, forever away from the world, just with her.

The matter was settled for him. McGuire came out of the bush and told him to go get his things, that they were leaving at once.

"McGuire, I can't believe it—that he is Clive Stanley. It simply can not be!"

"Ask Madame Du Beque."

He intended to ask her at the very first opportunity, to make his opportunity; but when he came to the house where she sat in a chair directing Doris and her boys as to what they should take and leave, she looked at La Salle with a deliberate coolness that made him uncomfortable and troubled as to what could be wrong.

He was not a timid man, and meant to inquire as to what he had done; but as if she arranged it intentionally, Doris remained near her.

To save her from the effort of walking she was carried in her chair by two of her natives to the edge of the cliff. The Bakari men had returned to their canoe, and as some of them had been more uneasy about climbing down than they had about coming up, they had made use of a rope that lay coiled at the top of the trail, which had been used for hoisting up things brought over from the ship. An end of this rope was fastened around her waist, and in case she slipped paid out as she descended. She carried the leather casket under her arm.

Williams did not believe that she was nearly so sick as she pretended, or perhaps

thought; but in a way that was neither gentle nor harsh he gave attention to her safety, even comfort. And for some reason it gave her a sensation of bitterness to realize that he was doing this, not for her but for Doris, because he did not want Doris to think unkindly of him.

Doris descended in the same manner, but with La Salle advancing foot by foot before her as if somehow he was adding to her safety by being in the way in case she should slip and knock him off the trail. And Williams, who had watched the natives pay out the line as Madame Du Beque went down, now put his own hands to it.

While they were getting into the canoe Captain Miller continued to shout desperately, now begging, now cursing, while the echoes of voice flung themselves from the cliffs. His living alone, and in fear, on the ship had nearly upset his brain; and he saw that they were preparing to leave and was afraid that he would be left behind. His life had been spared by Madame Du Beque's natives partly because Doris, with a flash of strange dominance for a convent girl, had told them to stop shooting at him; and partly because Madame Du Beque's health had for a time appeared to improve.

Williams was the last to descend the cliff. He came down rapidly, hardly seeming to look where he was going. He took his place in the stern of the canoe, just in front of Marugi, who then shouted, and the paddles swept the water. The canoe glided with the silence of a shadow in a mirror across the lagoon and came broad-side to the ship.

Williams stood up to direct Miller to the place he should climb into from the ship's side; but Miller suddenly straightened up, his one eye almost popping from his head. He cried—

"My ——, Hurricane Williams!"

La Salle had thought himself incapable of another sensation of surprize, but he looked around with an astonishment that made his face almost grotesque.

Doris was as if thunderstruck. She had been half-twisted around to look at Miller, and as he shouted the name and pointed her eyes went to Williams, who instantly had glanced at her; and he saw her amazement and horror. His name had been spread through Europe, talked about everywhere, particularly among religious people who had remembered and discussed the terrible crime long after the interest of other people was taken up with more recent sensations.

His glance flashed from Doris to Madame Du Beque too quickly for her to conceal the instant's smile. And she never smiled intentionally, unless with the more favorable profile, for a mirror had taught her that her smiles were ghastly.

"Get down!" he said to Miller; and Miller with clumsy nervousness crawled down and settled himself in the canoe with the air of a dog that has been whipped.

The natives glanced about uneasily, sensing that something unfortunate had happened.

Marugi shouted again. The paddles dipped. The canoe headed squarely for the passage though the tide was almost at its worst for going out; but the rowers now felt that they need not care much about such things. Williams was with them.

X

AT THE beach, the village of Bakari swarmed to greet the returned canoe. The natives gathered around curiously eager about the white women, but doubtful of the hawk-eyed Kingsmill men who leaned on their rifles with an air of proud indifference.

As the canoe on its way in had passed the *Islander*, her rail studded with cannibal faces peering over it, Delaney had shouted that the shell was out. A pretty little native girl in a grass skirt, with flowers in her hair, stood lightly balanced on the rail; and Doris said to La Salle—

"What a pretty child!"

"Yes, isn't she," La Salle answered readily.

"You think a black girl like that pretty?"

"She is half-white."

"Oh that makes it worse. She looks like a savage. I don't think she is a bit pretty."

"She isn't," said La Salle quickly.

"But you just said that you thought she was!"

She looked away from him and kept her face away for a long time while La Salle was moodily puzzled by the mystery of woman nature.

It was well toward the end of the afternoon when the canoe had come in; and Williams, after he and McGuire had landed on the beach and talked—or rather while McGuire listened—then sent Madame Du

Beque and Doris, with the Kingsmill men out to the *Jack and Jill* as the better place for the women to remain. La Salle went with them to assist in their getting settled on board.

Williams and McGuire went to the hut where Mathers lived. From the time he had learned of Williams' arrival, Mathers had not put his head out of the house.

McGuire stepped inside and saw Mathers squatting in a corner on his mat.

"Come out, Mathers. Williams is here."

"Don't kill me, you fellows. Don't kill me. I'm sorry. I'll tell the truth— I'll go with you to Sydney and tell the truth."

"Come on."

Mathers slowly came to the doorway. He was a wretched-looking fellow. His body had been thinned down by meager living and fear. He was shrunken, with his clothes bagging about him. His face was thin and showed it in spite of his beard, and the eyes were sunk and furtively restless from much glancing about at shadows on all sides. He gave one quick look at Williams, and did not again raise his eyes. But when he realized that he was not to be killed, that Williams wanted only to get the facts of the *Good Shepherd* crime, Mathers found his tongue.

Williams heard him for the most part in silence; when he spoke it was with a question; and when he had heard all that he wanted to know, he simply said—

"Come on, McGuire," then turned and walked off.

Mathers gazed after them stupidly. There had not been a word of promise, of abuse, or a threat. He did not understand it.

"McGuire," said Williams, stopping abruptly and turning.

"Yes, skipper."

"McGuire, I am going to sea tonight. You remain here, you and La Salle——"

"But skipper!"

"Quiet, McGuire. Somebody must remain here to take out the *Jack and Jill* in case something happens to me."

"Nothing can happen to you!"

"Somebody must stay who can navigate and whom I trust. Don't let 'Blackbird' Miller near the schooner. And I am taking those Kingsmill natives with me because if they remain with that woman she would make you take out the schooner. Or would kill you and make Miller or Mathers take it out."

"Skipper, she wouldn't do that!"

"I know her, McGuire. She never hesitates when there is something she wants. Look at the *Ballagat*—and the way she drove it into Kakarutu. Not once in a thousand times would a ship have missed being knocked into matchwood."

"Aye, ten thousand!"

"McGuire, it was not until the *Good Shepherd* that I cared what was said of me. But now I have to clear my name beyond all chance of doubt."

McGuire, remembering the look that had come into Doris' eyes at the name of Hurricane Williams, understood.

"When I get my hands on Fellowe and that Jerry Rand, I shall take the three of them and sail straight into Sydney. The crew and other missionaries of the *Good Shepherd* will be able to identify them."

"But give yourself up, too!"

"Those three men are the only men under heaven that can clear us, McGuire. After that the law will overlook other things. The evidence of any one of them would create some doubt as to our guilt; two would divide public opinion; all three will convince public and courts."

"But Willerby, skipper?"

"He is wealthy, influential, powerful. I doubt if the combined oath of those three men could get him hanged for his part. He would say they lie, and all the world knows they are scoundrels. He would deny everything, and the people of the *Good Shepherd* could not point to him as one of the murderers."

"But if you meet with him?"

"I will throw him into the hold and take him along with the other murderers. But he would escape the law, McGuire. His wealth is too great. Nothing but the blow of man to man would ever punish one of his influence and craft; and for me to try to punish him myself as he should be punished would be put down to mere revenge, and coming at this time would destroy the chance of having other things I have done overlooked. People would say if he were guilty, why wasn't he handed over to the law, like the others?"

"Aye."

"I am going to Willerby Island after Fellowe. If Willerby and Rand are somewhere off New Georgia, I shall go on after them. If Willerby and Rand have gone home, I shall return here, then sail for Fiji

after them. If I do not come back, take your schooner to San Francisco."

"Mathers and Miller?"

"Whatever you like."

"And, skipper, what if Madame Du Beque lives on—and on?"

"I can not advise you. But fortunately whatever her evilness, McGuire, she does love that beautiful girl. It is the one white spot in her life. It often happens so with women like that."

"And La Salle, skipper?"

"La Salle is a good man."

"But you will come back."

"I will come back, McGuire; but you stay on the *Jack and Jill* until I do."

They then went down to the beach and were rowed out to the *Jack and Jill*.

Doris was with La Salle looking over the side at native children that were swimming about the ship. When she saw who was coming she left him and disappeared.

He came toward Williams and McGuire as they reached the deck, and tried to conceal his disturbed feeling at having learned that Captain Douglas was the infamous Williams, but his manner was strained and there was the unconscious tenseness in his eyes.

"Madame Du Beque?" asked Williams.

"She is lying down, captain."

Williams went below. La Salle felt relieved that he was not asked to accompany Williams, for Madame Du Beque had been very chill in her reception of attentions to her comfort. When La Salle had helped her into the cabin he asked—

"Madame, you seemed offended?"

"Offended? I am amazed! You who were to keep my secret, carried it to Hurricane Williams, the worst enemy I have in the world."

"I assure you that I did not know Captain Douglas was Hurricane Williams."

"But you talked, sir, of what I had told you in confidence!"

"Madame, please! I promised to keep what you told me, and what I should learn elsewhere from your daughter. I shall sacredly respect that promise."

"Please do not argue with me or defend yourself with evasions. You have failed in my opinion of you. I am tired. I would lie down. I would be alone."

"Madame, one word. I feel that I must know. *Is* he Clive Stanley?"

Madame Du Beque's black eyes stared at him stonily. Her hand went to the scarred cheek, and her manner was one of cool astonishment, as if she had never heard of such a thing before.

"Ah," she said slowly, "so *that* is the way Williams is trying to trick you! He is more dangerous than other men, Mr. La Salle; and deeper." Then furiously: "It is a lie! An utter black and damnable lie! Remember, he is the Williams of the *Good Shepherd!* He told you that to prepare the way to seize——"

"He did not tell me, madame."

"He did not tell you!" she cried, a little disconcerted.

"His sailor told me, Daniels."

"Daniels? Who is Daniels?

"The sailor that came with him."

She laughed without humor.

"Daniels! Dan McGuire—also of the *Good Shepherd*. Williams told him to tell you. It would seem more convincing." Her manner now, though she was reproaching him, softened a little as if he was partly forgiven: "You do not know of what men are capable, Mr. La Salle. But since Hurricane Williams is your friend——"

"He is not my friend!" said La Salle indignantly. "I told you I knew nothing of Captain Douglas."

"But that you trusted him!"

"I was mistaken in him."

"Mr. La Salle," she asked, her whole attitude suddenly changing into one of sad, almost wistful friendliness, "perhaps I have been mistaken too. But I am so, so suspicious of men. So few are to be trusted. Can you promise me that you will not listen to that Williams? Not believe a word of that smooth-tongued McGuire? And may I depend on you now, as when I thought I could when I first saw you?"

"But madame——"

La Salle was remembering the way Williams had approached Doris, and how the utter strangeness of his manner had been made understandable by McGuire's words, accented with sincerity.

"But what, sir?" she asked, stiffening at this sign that he was not being pliable.

"Is it not possible that he is Clive Stanley, unknown to you? McGuire said that convicts——"

"Do you think that *I* would not know Clive Stanley? And that old story about a man being saved by convicts—it is common in the South Seas. It is told of three or four men. But I see that you have been

convinced, Mr. La Salle. Please leave me. It was my mistake to place trust in you."

"Madame, I will——"

"Please leave me!"

She turned away unsteadily. La Salle made a movement to assist, but she motioned his hand aside, giving him a chill, hard glance in which there was disappointment, but not of the nature that he thought. She was disappointed because he was not a daring, resolute man, one that she could use against Williams. La Salle was too thoughtful, too honest, and, she almost feared, too intelligent. Besides, she had uneasily watched Doris' increasing interest in him; and though this had been tolerable on the island, she had grown increasingly jealous of having Doris love any one but herself.

Madame Du Beque was a woman in broken health, desperately ill, and weak; but she was the type of woman who is inspired by great determination when there is an end in view; she seemed able to keep on her feet and hold death at arm's length until she had finished her work. This spirit, combined with beauty, cunning and heartlessness, had made her irresistible in her youth, and now supported her.

She was lying on a bunk with Doris standing beside her and talking of Williams when he came. He was barefooted, but there was nothing stealthy about his steps, and they heard him.

Doris looked through the stateroom door, then after a movement of drawing back placed herself squarely in it.

"I wish to speak to Madame Du Beque," said Williams quietly.

"My mother is ill."

"My business is important."

"This has been a very trying day for her. She wishes to be alone."

But as she said it Doris felt a chill go through her. The expression in Williams' eyes had changed, and without another word he stepped forward, and she drew aside quickly.

Madame Du Beque raised on an elbow, sent an uneasy glance toward Williams, then asked Doris to go on deck, and when Doris went out she listened intently for the girl's steps on the stairs. She did not want Doris to overhear what might be said; or if there was a chance that Doris could overhear she wanted to know it so that her answers might be shaped accordingly.

Williams said briefly that he was leaving on the *Islander*, that he would take the Kingsmill boys with him, that McGuire was remaining on the *Jack and Jill* with instructions to take the schooner to San Francisco if he did not return.

"I merely warn you that if anything should happen to McGuire that you will not be able to use either Miller or the other captain that is here. The natives here will see to that."

"Why do you take my boys? Am I to be left alone in the midst of these cannibals? Where are you going? You—" she sprang up, frightened by the thought— "you are taking Doris!"

Her eyes blazed; she groped about her as if feeling for a weapon.

"I go to Willerby Island."

"To get Fellowe. I understand." She was staring hard at him. "Send Areko to me and I will tell him to obey you as he would me."

"That is hardly necessary, madame."

"But I may not see him again. He has been faithful. I wish to thank him."

"No," said Williams giving her a look that made her realize that once again she was beaten, "not unless I am standing by while you *thank* him."

And in turn she gave him a look of intense hate, closed her eyes and sank back.

Then without opening her eyes, in a low tired voice, she said:

"Take La Salle with you. I don't want him about. I don't like him. He is in love with Doris and she—" her eyes opened— "she is almost in love with him."

Perhaps she knew how to direct the stroke, or it may have been luck; but Williams instantly said—

"I will take him."

Impervious as he was to the ordinary passions, and though he respected La Salle, he was stirred by an ache at the thought of his daughter pouring her heart and love out to another man before he had felt her firm warm arms on his neck and heard her say, "Father!"

McGuire, who knew him well, ever insisted that the reason Williams was so hard and harsh was because he was continually beating down his kindlier impulses. He was always gentle toward native children, and in Samoa they had no awe of him at all.

Now it happened that Doris had listened at the open skylight long enough to hear her mother ask for Areko, and Williams refuse.

Doris immediately ran to Areko. He went aft, and crouching out of sight by the skylight waited until Williams had come up the companion, then darted noiselessly below.

Madame Du Beque opened her eyes and he was in the doorway. It was as if he had been called by the terrible thoughts like an incantation that were at that moment in her mind.

"Close the door," she said, sitting up quickly.

Areko closed the door.

She spoke rapidly:

"Areko, Williams wants to take you and your men on his ship. Go. At Willerby Island there will be a fight. Slade Willerby himself may be there. Do as Williams tells. Fight well. If Willerby is killed there we can return to Valkua and live in peace. If I had it to do over, we would not leave Valkua. There would be a shot in the dark for Slade Willerby!"

"I say then that I would do it!"

"I know you did. But now listen. On the ship as Williams is coming back, Areko, kill *him!* Beware, for he is a terrible man. Have your boys placed about the ship, and when they hear your shot, let them seize it and return here. Then we will go away. Use your gun. Don't let him get his hands on you. You will do that?"

"I obey," said the savage.

"Go quickly now, or he may know you have been here."

Areko hurried out as noiselessly as he had come.

Madame Du Beque sank back with a smile that she would not have used had there been a mirror before her, not though she was alone in the room with it. She would have been frightened. After a great sigh she lay motionless, hardly breathing, but from time to time the smile reappeared.

On deck La Salle was doing his best to protest against accompanying Williams.

Williams had walked near him, stopped, said—

"La Salle, you are going with me on the *Islander*, now," and walked on forward.

"Did you hear that!" La Salle said to McGuire, who had just been telling him the truth about the *Good Shepherd.*

McGuire nodded.

"I refuse. Most certainly I refuse!"

"I like you, La Salle. And he likes you. I don't know why he has changed his mind, but don't refuse."

"What will he do?"

"I don't know," said McGuire with a gesture that seemed to discard as useless any guess that he might make. "But there's some reason, somewhere."

"He has been talking with Madame Du Beque."

La Salle said it more to himself than to McGuire, and he understood in a way that he would not have tried to explain why she might wish him out of her sight. She had seemed to believe that he was a friend of Williams. La Salle could not help doubting that she really believed this. Perhaps it would serve to show that he was not a friend if he refused to accompany Williams.

The big canoe that was to run Williams and the Kingsmill men from the *Jack and Jill* to the *Islander* had come alongside and the natives were throwing vegetables and nuts, which they had brought as a present, on the deck.

"I shall simply tell him that I am not going."

"I'd rather have you stay," said McGuire. "If you stay, I'd take you over and let you hear Mathers tell it himself. But you won't stay. It's this way, La Salle. The minute Williams lets anybody refuse to do what he tells them to do, well, he would no longer be Hurricane Williams. He may never think of it in just that way, but he knows it."

"But what can he do, if I just simply say I am not going?"

McGuire made a vague wave with his arm, said nothing, and grinned slightly.

Williams, followed by the Kingsmill men, each with his rifle, came to the rail just above the canoe, and they began letting themselves down over the side. When the last one had entered the canoe, Williams said—

"All right, La Salle."

La Salle came to him and stopped, saying with nervous quietness:

"I am not going, captain. You have no right to expect me to go."

"That is true, La Salle," Williams answered as quietly but with no nervousness. McGuire's grin vanished. "But jump down into the canoe."

"I refuse!"

It was said with a firmness of which there could be no doubt.

Williams instantly and with a quickness that was like a flash of movement seized La Salle, gripping his arms to his side, and half-tripping, half-lifting him over the low

rail, held him for a moment then dropped him into the canoe. He did it without anger and hardly an appearance of violence. Then he jumped down and the canoe shoved off, with all the natives grinning.

La Salle's face was a beet-red from anger and chagrin, but he remained quiet. He was humiliated, astounded, not afraid, and he knew that he was helpless. He would not look toward the ship, for Doris was at the rail. She had seen.

She came directly up to McGuire, her eyes flashing.

"What is that man doing with Mr. La Salle?"

McGuire regarded her with soothing mildness, and said slowly:

"I don't really know, miss. But if I *had* to guess it would be that the skipper is taking him along to hear the dying statement of some men that are likely to be hurt at a little island up the coast. Other men might hear it too, but La Salle's name and appearance would have more effect in court. For you see, Miss Stanlea, Hurricane Williams never saw the *Good Shepherd* in his life!"

"That is not true. You are horrible men, all of you. You, you yourself are Dan McGuire!"

Beautiful and unafraid, she looked at him for a moment, then with a movement very like disdain, turned on her heel and walked away.

The canoe, in returning, brought A-Ina whom Williams had sent back. She came up to McGuire and took his arm affectionately, rubbing her soft cheek against it; but she talked of Delaney, whom she loved with all the sweet, trusting, generous passion of a little heathen, which she was.

And of course, feeling entirely at home on the schooner, she went into the cabin, and there met Doris. For a minute or two she stared shyly at the beautiful white girl, then smiling in complete friendliness walked up and took her hand, and began curiously to finger Doris's clothes and talk to her as a child talks to a gentle stranger.

CHAPTER IV

I

THE *Jack and Jill* was anchored about two hundred yards from the beach, with islets all about like little tufts of jungle set in the smooth water.

It rained several times during the night, but the sun came up bright and warm, and shortly after daybreak natives, men, women and children came out to the ship. They swam out and came in canoes, bringing presents and expecting gifts. They were curious and merry, and pried into everything that their fingers could move. They clustered about the companionway, peering down, chattering, eager to go below but as this had been forbidden, they waited for the white women to come on deck.

Then a shout went up. There was a rushing to the sea-ward rail, a pointing and staring at the topmasts of a ship which was passing behind a tiny island; and in a few minutes a strange bark nosed into view.

Most of the natives, and all of the women and children, jumped into the canoes or water and went splashing for the beach. Like animals, they are intensely curious but warily shy, so that anything unusual is viewed with alarm. Besides, the instant they caught sight of the bark's deck, on which were strange natives and many whites, they thought this was a blackbirder. But some felt a sense of security on the *Jack and Jill's* deck and intended to remain; but when a boat full of armed men was lowered away from the bark before she dropped anchor and came rapidly toward the schooner, they began to jump into the water and strike for shore.

McGuire was watching the approaching boat with uneasiness when he heard steps behind him, and looked around.

Madame Du Beque, very pale and trembling from illness and repressed agitation, had seen the bark from her room; and gathering all the strength she had, rushed up and as he looked behind him she thrust out her arm with a gesture like accusation and cried:

"That is Willerby's ship! What shall we do! What shall we do!"

At once there was a puff and roar from the unshipped forward-gangway of the bark and a six-pound ball whistled overhead on its way to the beach. The natives, that were there waiting and watching, yelled excitedly and scrambled into the bush.

Fellowe, returning to Willerby Island, had found Willerby ready to give up his search and return to Fiji, where his affairs were really in need of him; but when he heard of the fight off Teakumigo he was furious; and though he believed that Williams had escaped and sailed away, he

quickly and thoroughly accepted Fellowe's suggestion that for the good of Willerby prestige, Bakari should be taught a lesson that it would not soon forget and that Teakumigo, which furnished many labor recruits, be revenged.

There were many Malaita men on the Willerby plantation, for as a rule natives are more easily recruited from a distant island than one close at hand, so some thirty of these with the four or five fromTeakumigo who were sailors on Fellowe's brig, had been armed and put on the ship with the promise of being allowed to clean out Bakari. These, together with the five white men and as many native sailors of Willerby's bark, the *Neptune*, made a strong fighting party—rifles against clubs, spears and a sprinkling of arrows. The *Neptune* and *Islander* had passed far apart in the cloudy night.

"Can't we get to the bush!" Madame Du Beque almost screamed, looking quickly at the shore.

McGuire looked all about. It was too late for even that; and white women in the bush would be no safer than wounded rabbits with hounds on the hunt. Many men, well armed, could hardly have defended the *Jack and Jill*. A six-pounder can knock holes at the water-line and smear up a deck. There was nothing to do.

"Madame Du Beque," he said, "we are caught. The devil knows how to plan things like this."

"Oh if you were only a man—a man like Williams—Stanley! If he were here! If my boys were only here—they would fight! My daughter—my daughter! O God, hear me! There is no God—there is no God!"

She was frantic, and now twisted her hands, now pulled at the cloth on her breast. Doris, too innocent or too courageous, to be shaken, had come up to her mother and tried to quiet her, begged her to sit down, to go below. The girl had a strange poise, a fearlessness that was almost like ignorance except for the bright light in her eyes.

As the boat from the *Neptune* drew near Madame Du Beque saw that it was in charge of Fellowe, and this gave her a little hope; but another boat had put off from the bark. Willerby himself had seen who was on deck through his glasses.

She regained her composure, or at least the appearance of it, to meet Fellowe. The boat came alongside and he climbed up, pausing to look fore and aft over the nearly deserted deck, and letting his gaze stop on A-Ina, who stood uneasily by McGuire, holding his arm.

McGuire half-sat on the rail, his attitude, entirely unconscious, being very like that of a curious idler. His nature was just merely unexcitable, which gave him a manner that was continually being taken for courage—and it may have been, though McGuire himself often and poignantly felt that he was deeply lacking in downright courage. He considered Delaney, with his headlong rashness, a brave man.

McGuire, who could swim like a native, had felt the impulse to go overboard and make for the shore; but he had hesitated, hardly knowing why, held partly by the shame of leaving three women alone—though by remaining he could do nothing, would do nothing. He had tried to make A-Ina strike out for the beach, but she would not leave him. Her dread of the Bakari natives was greater than any danger she saw from the bark.

"Well, well, well!" said Fellowe, with a kind of hollow heartiness as he came up to Madame Du Beque, thrusting out a big hand.

Fellowe was a large, thick-chested man, with slightly gray hair, heavy features, thick jaws and eyes that gave a superficial impression of humor and good nature. He was cruel as a savage, at times violent in his anger, but it pleased him to punish the plantation boys by what he called "jokes," such as tying them heels in the air with their heads barely under water. At such times he laughed heartily at the contortions with which they struggled to keep from drowning. He was resourceful in thinking up "jokes." He was brutal and looked it, but he was not a coward.

"How 'd you ever get on this hooker, Lania? Where's Mathers? We gave him up for drunk and sunk. Ha-hah! You've had quite a row with Slade, I hear. So this is the girl. Well, well! Just like her mother used to be."

He looked at Doris from head to feet, deliberately.

"Bob Fellowe you must help me! I was coming to you, but that scoundrel Miller sent back word. I've stood between you and old W. W. many times. You have influence with Slade. He's afraid of you. Help me! Won't you help me?"

"Sure. Sure," he answered carelessly, staring at McGuire. "Who's that?"

"Dan McGuire!"

"A-ho-ho!" Then striding toward McGuire fiercely: "Where 's that —— pirate Williams? Where 'd he go? You tell me the truth, too!"

Fellowe drew back a fist.

McGuire lifted his eyes. There was something unnaturally sleepy about them as he said dispiritedly:

"Out to sea, headin' for 'Frisco—with shell. I was to follow on this schooner, but the native crew ran off in the bush. And here we are!"

Fellowe's eyes scrutinized A-Ina while McGuire was speaking, and without taking his eyes from her asked:

"How 'd you get this schooner? Where's Mathers?"

"Over there in the bush. We came down with him from the Carolines."

Fellowe grinned in a way that showed his lower teeth at McGuire and with a slow parting look that was like a threat, turned again to Madame Du Beque, saying:

"So Lania, you threw yourself on the breast of Williams, eh? Instead of coming to me, you fell in with your old friend, Hurricane. And he went off to 'Frisco town and left you? Here comes Slade now. I'll see what I can do. Pretty wild, Slade is, over the way you treated him."

He turned to the rail as the next boat drew near.

Madame Du Beque's manner had changed. A look of repressed fierceness came into her pale, thin face and stayed there, for she saw that Fellowe was to be distrusted rather than depended on, though he had always been ready enough to pretend a deep strong friendship while old W. W. was alive. She had overheard McGuire's answer, and knew instantly, what he had in mind.

Willerby Island was well under twenty-four hours away—there and back—Williams might return before they would leave the lagoon—then, but with a stroke of agony, she remembered Areko. Suddenly her knees seemed to give way, her body swayed a little, and Doris, having an arm around her, felt the pressure and almost called for some one to help support her mother. But Doris was not a girl to cry out readily. She thought her mother's sudden weakness was due to the presence of Slade Willerby, who at that moment was coming on deck followed by a rather tall, thin, evil-featured young man—Terry Rand.

II

SLADE WILLERBY was about thirty, very large of frame as his father had been, with shapely features though his face appeared slightly puffed, as the faces of most men do when they eat too much and drink too much. Fifty feet away he appeared extremely handsome; at arm's length his shapely mouth showed itself to be one of sensual cruelty, and the lines of the strong jaw were seen to be nothing but little pads of fat that had settled there; his eyes were too close together, dark eyes, very steady in their gaze at a woman's body; the back of his head bulged. He was enormously vain, had never controlled a passion in his life, and was a coward; but not unsuccessful in his business affairs. He was not a direct, hard bully and fighter as his father had been, but more suave and smooth, in a way more dangerous.

He was now so delighted with the turn of events that he was almost pleasant, though with a good deal of mockery very near the surface of his manner.

Terry Rand, whom he liked and kept with him almost continually was, in a phrase, a dandified wharf-rat. He came up and eyed McGuire, stood before him and laughed.

"So you are Dan McGuire?"

Again the laugh, as if he knew something very amusing of which McGuire could not possible be aware. McGuire looked at him with a drowsy alertness, checking the very strong impulse to say something unwise.

"Brave man, you are—you and Williams, to pick on missionaries," said Terry Rand with amused scorn. "Why don't you go after men?"

McGuire held his tongue and meditated murder.

Rand turned away to the side of Willerby, who was saying with a slight sneer in his words:

"This is a pleasure I've been after a long time, Lania. Ah, Miss Stanlea. What an unexpected meeting! Don't look so as though the pleasure was all mine, Lania. You misjudge me. Yes, really you do."

"Doris, you will please go to my room. And remain."

"No mother! I shall stay here with you."

Terry Rand, after staring for a time first at Doris then at Madame Du Beque, came up to A-Ina who sidled to the other side of McGuire. Rand tried to tease her, talk to her, pet her. At first she struck his hands away without speaking; then suddenly she put her face on McGuire's shoulder and did not move though Rand stroked her arms and poked her ribs playfully.

This was no fun, so he called her a few vile names, pulled his cap over an eye, thrust his hands into his pockets and with a swagger sauntered back to Willerby's side, without in the least knowing that he would hardly ever again be as near death without meeting it.

The small cannon roared again at the bush. A boat-load of natives and whites was on its way to the beach to slaughter whom they could find.

Willerby was just a little embarrassed by Doris remaining on deck; embarrassed only because he could not say what he wanted to say to Madame Du Beque. He thought that, knowing her as he did, knowing her history, her fears, and her present helplessness, that he could force her into a different attitude, one that would give him the chance to show his most seductive manner to the girl; for Willerby was one of those men who believe themselves quite irresistible when they have anything like an opportunity and try to be.

Madame Du Beque was clever; he gave her credit for that; and she could tell her daughter that he wasn't such a bad fellow, and that she had found out that some of things she thought of him weren't true. Willerby, to state the matter plainly, was not the sort of man who wanted merely a girl's body; he wanted her soul; he wanted her to love him, to trust him, to think him wonderful; and he was immensely gratified the time or two that women had committed suicide when he discarded them. He possibly had never put the thought into words, for he was incapable of such self-analysis, but suicide seemed the complete tribute to his way with women, which was the vainest thing about him.

Again Terry Rand restlessly turned away from a scene that was too quiet to interest him. He crossed to Fellowe:

"I say, Bob. We're missing all the fun. Let's go over and pot some niggers."

"Go along. Take my boat and crew that's alongside there. Say, and hunt up Mathers. He's over there—if they haven't killed him."

Fellowe was indifferent about it. His heart was callous as a sailor's palm.

Rand quickly tumbled down into the boat, calling on the men to hurry or they would miss all the sport.

"I afraid! I afraid!" A-Ina whispered.

McGuire could feel that her body was a-tremble. She now sensed a danger more to be dreaded than cannibals.

In the mean time Willerby was shading his manner, without hardly changing it, to a strong appearance of sincerity in his anxiety about what had become of Madame Du Beque and Doris, and gave that as the motive for having followed. He seemed very convincing in his fear that Lania would misjudge him now, as she had in the past.

He had little expectation of deceiving her, but hoped to influence Doris; and besides, he was paving the way to make it easier for the mother to take that different attitude toward him which he expected to compel her to take.

He knew Madame Du Beque almost as well as she knew him; and she, seeing what he was about, at least so far as he was trying to create a favorable thought or two in Doris, became quite as anxious to have the girl out of hearing as she had been when she was afraid that he would speak out the terrible things he knew of her.

Whether from weakness in the very great strain that she was under, both in body and mind, or whether to put an end to this conversation, Madame Du Beque simply closed her eyes and sank to the deck.

Doris gave a low, quick cry and bent to her, trying to lift her, carry her. Willerby stooped, too, calling to Fellowe who came at once but without rushing at all, and they carried her down into the cabin, into her room, and placed her on the bunk.

III

ON SHORE there was shooting and shouting; all the huts were burned, all the canoes destroyed, all the garden patches ruined.

The natives had taken to the bush, but the Malaita men were good trackers. Being armed with rifles they had but little to fear

if they did not break into small parties and go far in the jungle. As a result the slaughter was not great—a few women, a child or so, and some dozen of the more braver men who were sniped while lurking about to get in a blow or an arrow—but the ruin was complete.

Tam was killed. He banged away with his rusty shotgun far out of range, and so disclosed his whereabouts. The old, helpless chief, Ngora, who was being carried off into the bush was killed when the natives who carried him were overtaken. Marugi and old Ghobau were on the *Islander* and Kivkto led most of the fighting. But he grew too bold, and they got him.

The heads of all that were killed, children's too, were cut off by the Malaita savages, carried to the beach and made into a little heap as an object lesson to Bakari when the natives should creep back to their ruined village.

The white men of the party, who got much the same sort of thrill out of it as out of pig-hunting, were not doing a thing more than had been done before, and was afterward to be done more frequently by traders and even officials of a most Christian country who turned armed Malaita men loose on the natives, women and children, that they might have a beneficent lesson in Justice.

IV

WHEN the fighting on shore had started, Mathers kept his head inside of his hut knowing that the Bakari men, in the midst of excitment, would kill him on sight. He shivered and wondered what was going on, and expected any moment that natives would rush in on him. Then he heard white men's voices and the sharp crackle of burning huts. He came out.

Terry Rand hardly knew him.

"What have they been doing to you, Pete? You look like a ghost with the belly-ache!"

"Have you killed Williams?"

"No, but we've caught McGuire, and McGuire said——"

"It's a lie!" Mathers shouted. "It's a lie! I never told him—I don't know how he learned but——"

Rand was gaping at him. Mathers looked crazy. His head must have been turned. Rand knew that guilt gnawed away on some minds until they broke, and he thought something of that kind had touched Mathers, which made Rand a little contemptuous though he said reassuringly:

"He doesn't know anything about *that*, Pete. I had a bit of fun with him over it—about picking on missionaries; and by ——, you would have thought he didn't know he hadn't done it! No, Pete. McGuire only said Williams had headed out to sea, and he was to follow on your schooner, but his crew jumped ship."

"I'll kill him," Mathers cried. "He tried to kill me. He made life hell for me!"

Mathers quickly told how he had been battered about in one storm after another and had made Kusaie for repairs, how Delaney and McGuire had sneaked on board his ship, made him prisoner, and of how he had tried to recapture her.

"I didn't let 'em know I knew them, 'r they'd have killed me."

"You go over an' get a jolt of whisky. I'm missing the fun. Fellowe is there. He told me to keep an eye out for you."

Terry Rand snatched a dried palm-leaf, lighted it, and gleefully set fire to a hut, shouting to a man near by that he wished the hut was full of niggers; it would be fun to see them come tumbling out, and pot 'em as they ran.

Mathers took a small outrigger canoe and paddled out to the *Jack and Jill*. He had but one thought in a head that was nearly fear-crazed. He must kill McGuire before he let it be known that Mathers had confessed. It would not have been so bad—though Mathers dreaded what would happen, particularly from Fellowe—if his friends learned that he had talked; but it would not have been so bad except that they would realize that if McGuire knew, Delaney also knew; and Williams, who would hunt them down one by one. At least they would feel that way about it. And their anger toward Mathers would be deadly. Fellowe at any rate would probably close his mouth for all time.

As he came to the schooner, Fellowe and Willerby, who had been talking of McGuire, helped Mathers up to the deck. There was hardly anything familiar about his wretched appearance; and in a moment they thought him crazy. Scarcely speaking to them, he at once snatched a rifle from where it lay on a hatch and leveled

it at McGuire on the other side of the deck, where he had been without hardly moving for the past hour.

"I'll even with you, you ——!" Mathers shrieked.

A-Ina screamed and ducked. McGuire in another instant would have thrown himself backward and overboard—he had been meditating on taking to the water—but Fellowe, cursing hoarsely, wrenched the gun away, and fastening a rough hold on Mathers shook him.

"Let me kill him! Let me kill him! He beat me and starved me, and tried to get the niggers to kill me! I swore I'd kill him! An' that girl—there—I paid for her! She's mine. He took her away from——"

"Stop that!" Willerby shouted. He did not want the women below alarmed.

"Aw shut up!" Fellowe growled, twisting Mathers around.

"That girl——"

"Is going to be mine, first. In a year or two—" Fellowe laughed gruffly—"you can have her. Be patient, and get fattened up, Pete."

"McGuire—I've sworn to——"

"You'll get all the revenge you want, Pete. That's McGuire—of the *Good Shepherd*. Slade's going to take him into Sydney—startin' this afternoon. And after his trial we'll all make it a point to be there, an' see him hanged!"

Fellowe had spoken with the purpose of letting McGuire hear, and now chuckling heavily, stared at him.

Slade Willerby smiled broadly and fastidiously adjusted his wide Panama's brim at a more rakish angle.

"But will them 'mishes' know him?" Mathers asked anxiously, in a lowered tone.

It was not the fear of the missionaries identifying him that troubled Mathers; it was the knowledge that at the first word McGuire spoke—and he wouldn't keep silent much longer, surely—they would know that Mathers had given them all away. They would probably end McGuire's life readily enough; and his own too.

The missionaries would identify McGuire all right. Terry Rand had seen to that, even coloring his own hair and clipping it afterwards. It was Rand who knew most about how witnesses are mistaken in court-room identifications. He was still young, but his experience with law matters was large.

So try as he might, and with a good deal of violence in his manner which made them sure that his head was turned, Mathers could not change their plans. Willerby wanted the fame of bringing McGuire to justice; Fellowe wanted the joke of it.

McGuire, with an air of quiet patience that they misread as dejection, waited on and on, casting a sleepily-lidded glance from time to time at the two armed Fijiian sailors off the *Neptune* that loafed on the deck to keep an eye on him.

He understood the situation as completely as Mathers did; but had no intention of throwing away his own life for the pleasure of getting Mathers into trouble.

Fellowe, grinning with his lower teeth exposed, crossed to McGuire.

"You heard us, didn't you, you —— murderer."

"I never was near the *Good Shepherd*. Never saw her."

"Ho-ho-ho-ho. Hear this, Slade. He says he never saw the *Good Shepherd*."

Mathers, catching McGuire's glance, thought that the time had come. He whipped Fellowe's knife from its sheath and lunged, but Fellowe, with a powerful blow, knocked Mathers to the deck.

McGuire glanced over the rail, about to leap; but the beach was far off. If he was not shot in the water he would be caught as soon as he touched the sand. If it were dark—there would be a chance. He leaned against the rail, almost as if idling.

"Slade, he's sure turned lunytic," said Fellowe, poking the dazed Mathers with a foot. "You fellows must have given him a touch o' hell," he added toward McGuire.

"Cut off his whisky," said McGuire, indifferently.

"No wonder he wants to kill you! That's drove him crazy. I knew there was something. Slade, you'd better get this fellow over on the *Neptune*, or Pete 'll get him, sure. Cut off his whisky, took his girl, an' stole his ship—an' killed Pete's missionary friends!"

Fellowe was having his little joke; but Willerby saw good advice in it, and so McGuire was sent over to the *Neptune*.

When he began to get down into the boat, A-Ina started to follow; but Fellowe caught her back, throwing an arm around her bare waist.

"No you don't, Sweet Eyes. You stay with me. All the girls like me. You'll

learn why—why you black little ——! Ow!"

With the sudden fury of a cat, A-Ina had slapped him, scratched, spit at him, and jerking away darted from his half-blinded groping. She ran aft with bird-like swiftness, and vanished down the companion, seeking Doris and her mother.

Fellowe cursed like a drunken pirate. Willerby laughed; he held his sides and leaned back, laughing.

"What are you grinning about!" Fellowe roared at McGuire, making a rush at him with upraised fist.

McGuire jumped lightly down into the waiting boat.

"You needn't grin, —— you!" Fellowe shouted from over the rail. "I'll fix *her!*"

V

THE *Neptune* was flush-decked with deck-houses fore and aft for living quarters, and what Willerby called his "dance hall" between decks, aft. There had often been high old times on the *Neptune*, for Willerby lived like a prince, the sort of prince that often has the throne kicked out from under him.

The *Neptune* was now deserted except for Hornabuck, second mate, a decent sort of South Sea man, and two native sailors. Hornabuck was a young fellow, a good sailor, who destested Willerby but liked his wages and the chance for advancement in the W. W. service. He was not a hypocrite, and he would never be distinguished for any particular nobility, but he did his work, minded his own business, and supported his mother.

Willerby had said to the sailors—

"Take McGuire to the ship and turn him over to Hornabuck."

Hornabuck looked at him curiously, and not knowing just what Willerby might want done with him, locked him up in the carpenter's work-shop and put a sailor on watch before the door. There was a small circular port beside the door, just large enough for a man to stick his head through.

McGuire, being a sailor, had at little more than a glance taken in the arrangement of this forward deck-house. The work-shop was on the port side and next to the galley which ran the width of the deck-house, with two doors opening aft.

He sat on a work-bench under the small open port and stared out, but could see nothing but water and tiny islands. The *Neptune* lay starboard to the beach, and everything of interest to be seen was on that side.

The native sailor, a Fijiian, at first loafed about in the passage-way outside before the door as if expecting McGuire to break through any minute. McGuire did not try to talk to the fellow, but he grinned at him a time or two, and presently the sailor smiled slightly, then turned away.

It was not long before he was curious to see what might be going on over on the beach, for there was a good deal of shooting and occasional bursts of shouting; and the native would walk to the forward end of the deck-house and stare across. The door of the work-shop was locked with a padlock, and it could not be broken open without noise. It was not long before McGuire, through the port, could see the fellow smoking and talking with another sailor, both of them with their faces to the beach.

McGuire at once closed the port tightly, smearing the glass with oil. Closing the port deadened sounds within the shop, and oiling the glass prevented any one from peering through. Then he took a brace and bit and bored a hole about three feet from the deck into the partition next to the galley, and putting his ear to the hole paused long enough to be sure that no one was approaching. Then he opened the port, took a breath of fresh air to steady his nervousness, which he felt more than he showed, and looked at the sailor who occasionally glanced back to see that the door was still shut and locked.

McGuire again closed the port, took a tapering saw and set to work. He would saw furiously for a few seconds, then pause, listening. Some one entered the galley. It was Hornabuck, as McGuire could see through the hole. Hornabuck stopped, looking about him. McGuire thought that he was caught. Hornabuck appeared to be puzzled and listening. Then McGuire heard dimly a great shouting. He saw Hornabuck peer out of the starboard door, then return and quickly pour himself a mug of cold coffee, drink it rapidly and hurry out to see what might be going on. McGuire then sawed desperately, for he reasoned that anything that had attracted the mate would hold the attention of all the sailors for a few minutes.

When he had cut three sides of a square he kicked against it, and the wood gave way. He crawled through and looked about him. He could possibly slip overboard without being seen, but there was hardly a chance that he could swim from the ship without a hue and cry. He must find some place to hide about the ship until night. Yet he knew that as soon as he was missed the ship would be searched until there wouldn't be a cockroach on board that wasn't rousted out.

Then he remembered that the ship was leaving that afternoon, and might be far out to sea by dark. At least he had heard Fellowe say Willerby was going out.

McGuire did not want a ten or fifteen mile swim through water that abounded in sharks, only to reach a beach where strange cannibals would probably cook him. That prospect almost decided him to slip overboard; but the nearest islet was a good hundred yards off, and was not much larger than a front yard. Somebody would be certain to see him, and even if he reached the island it would be surrounded and searched.

He could not go swimming from one to another while men in boats followed, with swimmers as good as himself to take to the water after him. Anyhow, he would be shot at—in broad daylight. That would not do. He had to hide. And if he could hide, they would be sure to think that he had somehow managed to swim off, for when a ship has once been thoroughly searched there isn't a spot big enough to hold half of a small man that hasn't been looked into.

There was a large, wooden water-tank in the galley, big enough to hold ten men. He climbed up and moved the heavy lid. It was nearly full. He measured roughly—himself against the water-line—and saw that it was over his head. That gave him a weakening thrill. He had no desire to drown in a scuttle-butt, and he could not keep on treading water in a place like that for the lord knew how many hours. But that was *the* one good accessible spot.

He looked rapidly about the galley, then took a bucket and capsized it in the tank. That would do to stand on. He was just about to slip in after it when he thought:

"What if people stand around here in the galley with the top off until I have to come up for air? They would be sure to hear the trickling off my head when I broke water?"

At that moment he would have given an inch or two out of his long neck for that much length of copper-tubing.

Again he looked quickly about the galley, and finding an empty quart bottle wrapped a cloth around it to keep the broken glass from falling over the deck; then snapped off the neck by striking it sharply with the edge of his palm. He removed the neck from the cloth, then dropped cloth and glass into the tank so there would be nothing to show that he had been about anything in the galley. With the bottle-neck in his mouth he shifted the lid of the tank and squirmed down, feet first. He held to the rim of the tank until his feet found the bucket, and balancing himself on the sharp edge of this bucket which permitted his chin to be barely above the water he shifted the cover back into place, leaving a crack for air. After that he put the bottle-neck into his pocket.

Then began his long and tortuous wait. The edge of the bucket cut his feet. He felt that he simply could not endure that for hours if he was ever to use his feet again. So he moved the cover a little, took hold of the tank's rim with one hand, and hooking his toes under the bucket's handle raised it until with the other hand he could turn the bucket bottom-side up in the water; then tried to make it sink in that position. At the fourth attempt he let the inverted bucket slip down between his legs, and placed his feet on the bottom. Then the situation was more endurable; but soon became painfully tedious. He thought that hours must have passed when only minutes had gone.

However, McGuire put in most of the time planning. It was with something of a jar that he realized that his situation was not so simple as he had thought. He would of course have warning that the water-tank was to be looked into by the talk in the galley, and the moving of the cover; and he could duck under—but ripples would be left, and it would be stupid eyes that did not instantly see something was wrong. This thought troubled him very much. He could, he knew, hold his breath for about two minutes though the strain would be agony. Nobody would stare at the undisturbed surface of water for anything like that long; so if he could manage to get down at the right time and come up at the right time there would be no ripples.

VI

THE cook, a fat white man and a fine chef—Willerby liked to eat well—had gone ashore with the party to pot a few niggers. It was not until one of the men remaining on the *Neptune* came into the galley about noon to find something for a "bite" that McGuire's escape was discovered. There was the opening he had crawled through.

He rushed from the galley with a shout.

In a moment men were in the galley, then Hornabuck began to swear. Chance for advancement in the W.W. service had gone glimmering unless he could find that fellow again. There was a rush to the sides of the ship to scan the water. Hornabuck cursed and struck the slack sailor who had been put on guard, and promised to kill him unless McGuire was found; and he wanted him found before Willerby knew that he had escaped.

Then began a prying and poking into every conceivable place. One of the natives even opened the oven door. The forward deck-house was searched, then Hornabuck rushed aft and looked into every stateroom, behind every curtain, under the bunks, in the wheel-house, chart-room, pantry, high and low.

At last the men came back to the galley and talked about the hole. Hornabuck himself believed that McGuire had gone overboard.

"Climb up and look in that tank," he told one of the men.

"It's full of water, sir. Filled it when we thought we was leaving for Fiji."

"That's right," said Hornabuck. But an instant later: "Take a look anyway. I'll see. —— it, we've looked every place else. I hope he's drowned himself!"

McGuire, from the time the men entered the galley this last time had been standing completely submerged, with only the edge of the bottle-neck out of the water. As the cover was moved he took a deep breath and slowly drew under. There was not even a ripple.

Hornabuck glanced at the water. The light was dim up near the top of the deck-house, the water looked black in a tank of soggy wood. He did not stare at it ten seconds, not five. The cover was slipped back; and McGuire, with his eyes open under water, saw darkness come over the tank, and quietly raised his head. It had been easy. He grinned to himself, breathing slow and deep.

At last Hornabuck had to give up. The *Jack and Jill* was within hailing distance, but neither Fellowe not Willerby were on deck.

Lania Du Beque was too weak and ill at last to stand; and they were making ready to bring her, mattress and all, to the *Neptune*. She was fully conscious, and when she understood that the *Neptune*, with only its crew, was to sail at once for Valkua she made no objections. She believed that Areko would kill Williams, so she must look to other hopes. Fellowe, Mathers, and the natives, would return to Willerby Island in the *Jack and Jill*. She would be glad to have them far away. The situation would still be desperate on the *Neptune*, but she was a desperate woman.

While she was being carried up to the deck a sailor was climbing over the side, bringing the word that McGuire had got away.

Fellowe swore fearfully and almost knocked the man down for being a messenger of such bad news. Fellowe was in an ill humor anyhow, and had been in the shade of the deck-house forward sullenly meditating on what had been almost a quarrel with Willerby.

How had Fellowe known that Willerby was going to do such a blazingly unexpected thing as to be almost humbly courteous to Lania Du Beque, whom he had always hated? He had said to Willerby—""You are a —— fool;" and Willerby, who did not like plain unpleasant words, had been angered. Willerby was a coward, and Fellowe knew it; but also Willerby was the owner of Willerby Island, and could throw Fellowe out of many comforts and do much that would be disagreeable.

Now, before he knew what was the matter, Willerby shouted at him to stop such cursing—as if Willerby had ever before cared how or how long a man swore, if he was not swearing at him. But Doris was standing beside her mother, whose mattress was held by six men.

Fellowe came aft, roaring. Mathers, half-drunk, followed, calling heaven to witness that he had wanted them to kill McGuire. Willerby himself was furious, but he did not forget that the girl was near by. Little A-Ina was holding to Doris' hand.

"He swum ashore!" Mathers yelled.

"He couldn't have got ashore without being seen," Fellowe shouted.

"Them niggers are all his brothers. He'd make for 'em!" Mathers cried.

"Stow your jaw-tackle, blast your drunken soul!" Fellowe bellowed at him. "He's on that ship. One of you fellows go to the beach and bring back all you can find. We'll search her right, and keel-haul that blankety Hornabuck!"

Willerby was excited. He hastily explained to Madame Du Beque that it would be better if she were not brought to the *Neptune* until the search was over, then jumped into a boat and was rowed off; and the six natives continued to hold her mattress until Fellowe said to take her below, then get themselves back on deck in a hurry.

They started below, bearing her carefully. Doris followed at their heels, A-Ina still clinging to her hand. At the companion A-Ina paused with a frightened glance backward. The next instant she was seized, jerked away, held.

"Now I've got you!" Fellowe shouted. "I'll teach you tricks!"

Doris reappeared at the companion, her eyes blazing:

"Let go of that child! You beast!"

Fellowe appeared suddenly amused:

"Child, ——! She's a woman."

A-Ina began suddenly to cry in shivery little whimpers with her free arm before her face.

"Let go!"

Doris' gaze was so fierce, so direct, that Fellowe was almost disturbed; but he was now reckless beyond caring what happened, or what Slade Willerby might think of it afterward. One of the moments that the devil waits for in every man's life was on him.

"Get down that ladder or I'll knock you down!"

He drew back his fist. She did not move.

From the bottom of the companionway Madame Du Beque cried out piercingly, afraid for her daughter. As Doris looked down behind her she saw her mother struggle from the mattress and fall to the deck before the natives that held it could check her. The next moment Doris was by her side.

Fellowe's face was red as his heart; but if shame touched him it was only to increase his anger. He half-dragged and half-carried A-Ina along the deck forward to the deck-house, dragged her into the forecastle, left her as she fell on the deck. Then he called to one of the natives, a big grinning savage, and told him to stay right there at the door.

"If you let her get away, I'll kill you!"

Then Fellowe sprang down into the other boat that was alongside and was rowed to the *Neptune.*

Mathers, who had sneaked into the galley as he saw Fellowe leaving, now looked out and about the deck. He emptied what was left in his bottle with rapid gulps, picked up a belaying-pin and reeled unsteadily toward the forecastle door.

Fellowe would knock him down, would he? Take away his girl? Let that blasted McGuire escape? He'd never liked Fellowe anyway. Never. No. And that girl, she was his? He'd paid for, hadn't he?

"Get 'way you black dog," he shouted at the native before the door; and the native, trained by many an object lesson to show respect for and to obey white men, stepped aside.

Mathers hesitated, reeled, staggered, lurched forward to catch himself, and so entered the forecastle. He turned unsteadily as if to go out again, swayed back and forth, half by accident shot the door closed, fumblingly made it fast. Then he turned and faced the terrified girl who had got to her feet and was backed in speechless fear against the bulkhead.

TO BE CONCLUDED

HAWK HATRED

by F. ST. MARS

Author of "Queen of the Pond," "A Royal Revolt," etc.

THE many-zoned hawk came round the corner of the spiked ten-foot mimosa-bush, very much as a wasp comes round the corner of a gooseberry-bush, in a whistling curve. He stabbed one sheathed, haughty glare at Cucullus winnowing along over the parched grass and baked earth, and whizzed back again. He had come to find prey, and had found another hawk.

At least, there was no mistaking the marks: the blue, steely back, the long, dark fan-tail, the smooth, lean head, the dirty-white breast transversely barred, and the sharp, dark wings, with their shallow-stroked flight—all the marks and the lines, the cut and the "rig," the uniform and the "house-flag," so to speak, that is the passport of the hawks all the world over.

That hawk's—all hawks'—eyes were extraordinary for their sharpness. What they could not pick out was—as with the hooked beak—usually not worth picking out at all. But there was one thing he had not seen in regard to Cucullus, one small point he had overlooked. And it made just all the difference in the world to her. The difference between life and death, in fact. Cucullus was unarmed!

A hawk in all else, Cucullus carried not one single weapon; neither fish-hook to her beak, nor lancet talon to her claws. She was, in short, a blatant bluff, a big flying fraud, a living elaborate camouflage, one of Nature's little jests—a fair, flirting female cuckoo. If that hawk had only known one-quarter the "cold feet" he had given her by coming round the corner in that sudden fashion, he would have cut short this story, and her life, in one swoop.

He did not, however. Wherefore Cucullus continued her way through the broiling glare.

The heat was something disgraceful, and presently Cucullus settled down in the comparative cool of the shade, shut one eye, and began to subside into her own feathers, so to speak, as birds do.

Possibly this pardonable slackening slightly of the everlasting lookout under which all wild creatures must live accounted for the half-yard or so of green snake whipping out of the green leaves about a yard away, as the lariat is thrown—whr-r-rp!

And Cucullus only bowed. Apparently she had made a special thing of bowing. Many birds, indeed, who have handsome, longish tails to fan appear to have done so. And Cucullus bowed that snake over her head. It was rather a neat little piece of business, because snakes may err in many things, but not in their aim; and they strike speedily.

Any warning Cucullus got, therefore, must have been too short to calculate. Nor did she wait for, as it were, the back-lash. She fell off that perch sidewise, with a scream, and fled round to the other side of those trees, which she entered again with one wary yellow eye upon the snake, now hanging by his tail like a swung rope.

Later, an apparition with the head of a

bad dream, feathers of blue-black ink, eyes of crimson, a horribly hooked beak, and wonderful wings as of Azrael, fell, hissing, out of space upon that green snake nearly terrifying Cucullus into a fit in the process, and carried it off, wriggling furiously the while. And Cucullus looked, and saw that that shape was a *bateleur* eagle. But just imagine slaying the most venomous of the serpent tribe for a living!

After that Cucullus sat on with a very bored look. The point seemed to be that Cucullus could not trust her camouflage in that hungry company, and she skulked in her tree, therefore, till the sudden, quick night of those climes came hurrying over the plains, and a lion, a nightjar, and a hippopotamus started up a lugubrious chorus together.

Then Cucullus flew down to the brink of the half-mile-wide stream, bowed her way neatly from between the jaws of two young crocodiles, drank calmly as if nothing had happened, and rose and went. And the going of her was as sudden and mysterious as anything about this bird of mystery could be.

At that time, thousands, and hundreds of thousands of birds, were engaged upon journeying—mostly by night—from that place to northern climes, and Cucullus did not appear to be among them.

However, she *arrived*—through fogs, and storm, and stress, through gale and rain, unharried by the slayers of the air, one may suspect, because of her camouflage, but mobbed eternally, wherever seen, by all the lesser ones; hated, aloof, slipping athwart the map of two continents, outcast and banned—a very witch of the bird world.

But, however her journey may be, her "a-coming in" was strange enough.

The big rushes of migrating Summer birds, returning to nest with us, had struck the shores mainly from near dusk to a little after dawn. It remained for Cucullus to brave the full day.

A male cuckoo, suddenly arrived unobserved, had called for a while from the sturdy green of a solitary oak near the shore, whose great back was forever bent to the gales. He had then passed on, only a voice still, till he could now be heard just faintly in the dull, hazed, green sea of foliage inland northward, when Cucullus arrived.

SHE came quite openly, in broad afternoon, on the heels of a laughing, sparkling rain-shower, flying steadily and straight at a height of about thirty-five yards, something hawk with her long stepped tail, something pigeon with her swift winnowing flight, and all mystery and alone to face the keen-eyed "White Patrol" of these shores.

As she approached one of the White Patrol, a great narrow-vaned herring-gull detected and swung out to meet her. But she kept straight on, her heart in her beak, but still not swerving aside. She was running the gantlet through which all the feathered ones must pass, and, if they can, survive.

The big gull tacked, ranged alongside, and overhauled Cucullus, regarding her closely and unutterably cruelly with his cold, waterlike eye. She felt, she must have felt, that under that unpitying, expert scrutiny, her camouflage was being put to a test more trying than it had ever been subjected to before, but the disguise held good, the hawklike make-up was sufficient, and the big gull put about on another tack with a single, ringing—

"*He-oh!*"

Thrice, as she neared the fretted lacework of the grounding waves, another member of the ever hungry White Patrol—once a common gull, and once an immature lesser black-back—came out to meet her, and, sailing on still wings, escorted her for a space, eying her tired appearance closely and suggestively, but mindful of the fighting reputation of the hawk folk, and finally not risking it.

So the female cuckoo passed straight on, challenged truly, but only that. The dreaded, treacherous wreckers, the White Patrol, let her by—straight on by to the old oak with silver shoulders bowed to the sou'west gales.

"*Cuckoo! Cuck-cuck-coo!*" came from the blue, dim vastness ahead, faintly as a whisper of soft music.

And behind, even as she again left the tree, flying north in the line of the first cuckoo, another speck, another cuckoo, was even then crawling up over the edge of the amber horizon out to sea, heading inland, heading for that very same bowed oak-tree. Ah, how many, I wonder, how many cuckoos had landed upon that tree in its old life?

Cucullus took a flight across the open of perhaps five hundred yards, and fetched up in a very graceful elm. Five minutes before the cuckoo ahead of her had left that elm; she saw the part of a caterpillar which he had for some reason been forced to leave untouched. Then she knew the reason.

A wine-red chaffinch on the edge of a twig, rendering his "smashing delivery" of song with all the verve that is peculiar to a chaffinch, caught sight of her striking form within arm's reach of him, and, falling backward, started a great outcry. It was like calling out, "Thief! Thief!" in a quiet street, and very exciting.

With yells the chaffinch threw himself as nearly at Cucullus as he dared. With more yells the chaffinch's subdued mate fell upon her from some secret nesting site; and with most yells of all, two great tits poked their black-satin skull-caps out of the elm-trunk itself, and promptly and literally threw themselves at her.

"Darn that camouflage!"

It may have been mighty useful in getting her here, but—well, it could go too far. Apparently these little fools had persuaded themselves that she was a hawk, and they invariably carried out the tribal custom of mobbing hawks.

After she had, by bobbing, saved her eyesight twice, Cucullus fled, having no soul for war. And as she did so, though she did not know it, the third cuckoo was leaving the oak and flying toward the elm, and a fourth cuckoo was making inshore all alone, heading toward the ancient oak. That is a cuckoo all over. They journey like that, each just the length of its own voice, about, from the next ahead and next astern, neither ever appearing to be conscious of the others, and each following each from selected tree to selected tree in line.

In fifty yards the little feathered mob dwindled and turned back to its "lawful occasions," and Cucullus sailed, with her still-winged glide, down to the long grass beside the waters of the estuary hereabout, where she did business, apparently, with caterpillars of tiger-moths.

Then it was apparent that he who takes on the uniform of the soldier must take on also the soldier's fights. It is not enough, in fact, to have a warlike livery; you must have warlike weapons, and a bloodthirsty heart. And Cucullus had neither.

She had not been there four minutes when a meadow-pipit spotted her, and was at her head in an instant.

Cucullus bobbed, and had to check again to save her yellow eyes from the meadow-pipit's mate, who had been fired at her out of nowhere. She pretended not to care, but she looked, and was, most unhappy. Cucullus was fourteen inches long, and big enough to eat the less than six-inch meadow-pipits, but that made no difference to her unhappiness.

In vain Cucullus tried to feed, but could *you* feed with a couple of fairies, darting, screaming with rage, about your head, trying to stab your eyes out with small daggers?

Finally a third meadow-pipit added his or herself to the attack, and Cucullus uprose and fled again, complaining wheezily, all across the clean daylight, toward the bank of trees that closed in the north.

There it was that she met her mate—her first, at any rate, if there be any truth in rumor which hath it that female cuckoos are birds of many loves.

She came—he saw her coming, and nearly choked with chuckles—swiftly beating under the sun, calling a cry, *her* cry, repeated five times, as she came hurrying, calling, *"Tet-tet-tet-tet-tet!"* all across the reddening sky of sunset.

The male cuckoo just had time to choke out: *"Cuck-coo! Cuck-cuck-coo!"* and to sail upon a beautiful arc into the tree Cucullus had just entered. Then he alighted, bowed and bowed again, like any courtier, fanned and raised his white-spotted, dark tail, and made soft, wheezy noises, not in the least like any courtier.

But, alas for the aching heart! Cucullus may have seen him with her peculiar expressionless orbs, but she gave no sign of so doing. So far as her actions were concerned he might have been thin air, and she promptly rose and flew straight on, her lover following respectfully a couple of yards behind and lower down, shouting: *"Cuck-coo! Cuck-coo!"* as he went.

I don't know whether he did this out of sheer bravado or not, but it seemed unfortunate, for, as if in answer—which it probably was—another cuckoo called among some trees dead ahead, and, as though out of sheer cussedness, Cucullus deliberately altered her course toward him, and settled in the tree where he was seated, now silent as a toad.

Then—well, then Cucullus occupied her

queer self with caterpillar-collecting, and the two male cuckoos, after much preliminary bowing, and arched flighting, and reptile swearing, fought. But as a fight it was a poor show. It appeared, as much as anything, to be a mix-up of wing-beating, much after the fashion of battling pigeons, and any cuckoo who could get himself much hurt in it would seem to be a mere mug.

Finally, however, the umpire, night, came and put a stop to the whole proceeding, and Cucullus slept close to the tree-trunk, trembling between dreams because a long-horned owl would persist in saying: "*Hoo! Hoo-hoo!*" whenever any sound of the night came near.

SOME weeks later found Cucullus still with her first love in a little grass-field, surrounded by high hedges, guarded by age-old oaks, and flanked at its lower end by a tiny copse through which a little stream, belonging to two moor-hens, ran, crooning softly to itself all day long.

Both cuckoos were apparently full friends now, and kicking up no end of a row—she with her loud, bubbling note, like: "*Gwock-gwock-gwock!*" and he with his wonderful, mellow, ringing, "*Cuck-coo!*" up among the branches of the oaks. From time to time he executed his beautiful, arched "marriage flight"—not entirely unlike that other marriage flight, of the wood-pigeon—and from time to time they flew down to feed among the rich grass.

It has been said that the female cuckoo stealthily watches small birds on their nests, but there was nothing stealthy about that strange pair at that time. Every small bird within sight or hearing must have been aware of their presence, and indeed they were constantly being forced to "move on" by the concerted and furious attacks of small birds, who seemed to know and loathe them.

This was especially the case with the male cuckoo, who, in his "marriage flight," again and again brought down upon his sleek cranium the lightning, darting fury of swallows and house-martins, who seem to have constituted themselves the fighting champions of all the small bird fraternity.

Nevertheless, Cucullus' next move showed that, whatever the small birds, or people, thought about it, she, at any rate, knew quite well what she was up to, for suddenly she vanished.

She dropped almost to the ground, deadly mute, and slid along on the far side of the hedge to the little coppice, into which she noiselessly vanished. The secrecy, the stealth, the instant change from open noise to sneaking, dodging, furtive self-effacement, were remarkable.

The male cuckoo, though now silent, continued on view, and to attract attention—small birds' attention.

Cucullus, on the other hand, was flying along the ground, in and out among the dense cover. She had been detected, of course. A sound as of a sparrow fight, deep in the coppice, said so, but it seemed impossible, in that maze of bushes, even for them to keep her in sight very long, without leaving their own nests unguarded, which they were presumably not anxious to do.

It was a bad business throughout, evilly done. Cucullus seemed to be flying about in the spinney, still low down, and settling here and there.

From time to time she uttered a chuckle, rather like the loud, bubbling "*Gwock!*" note. This she continued to do constantly collecting the small birds in a noisy mob about her, then vanishing, and turning up again with her uncanny chuckle, all alone, somewhere else, for quite fifteen minutes, till finally she flew sharply down a leaf-curtained "ride," and sank into a carpet of blue-bells.

When next she rose she was carrying in her somewhat curved beak an egg. That egg was of a mottled-brown hue, and so stupidly small that it seemed utterly absurd that it could belong to Cucullus herself. It might have been the rather large, very dark egg of, say, a robin, but it was undoubtedly the property of Cucullus, all the same.

You could see that by the immense care she was taking of it. No other bird's egg would have been handled by her in that priceless-gem fashion.

And then Cucullus did a strange thing. Without the slightest hesitation she flew straight to a bank—the bank which enclosed the coppice, as a matter of fact—heavily curtained in one place with ivy, in so obvious a fashion that it spelt "Here nests a robin" as plainly as if the fact were advertised upon a notice-board.

Into the ivy slipped Cucullus, and stopped—at a cleverly hidden, neat, trimly kept robin's nest. Of course! What could be expected? Was she not a cuckoo, the

witch of the bird world? How she found that nest, was a marvel.

There was no sign of the robins. Perhaps Cucullus had, in her maneuverings purposely drawn them off. Anyway, there she was, carefully placing her treasured egg in the robin's nest, furtively, neatly, and, if appearances counted for anything, all unseen.

There were three legitimate robin's eggs in that nest at the time, and of those three Cucullus picked up one, and flew away with it into the bushes.

One thing sure, though, and that is that, although quite noticeable, the cuckoo's egg in the nest did not seem to arouse any suspicions in the robin's red breast when she returned, and she settled down at once to the ghastly monotonous process of "sitting" in the usual way.

Cucullus' conduct immediately following this foul act of treachery was as mysterious as the rest of her proceedings, for from the moment that she vanished with her plunder nothing was seen of her, nor did she make any sound, till she rose suddenly, far up the hedge, in an oak-tree, shrieking her uncanny: "*Gwock! Gwock! Gwock!*" apparently in an exploding, excited ecstasy of wicked glee, loud and strange, awaking, it seemed, an instant responsive, triumphant excitement upon the part of her mate, as he hurried to her post-haste.

After that outburst they fell together into silence, and one could not tell what they did. Only this was certain, that when the farmer appeared, walking very slowly and very softly adown the hedge, on the keen look-out for pigeons or rabbits, both birds, taken aback somewhat by the silence of his approach, flew hurriedly out of the tree in front of him.

"Hawks!" exclaimed he, and fired—both barrels, right and left.

Cucullus' head stopped going forward, and her lovely spot-barred tail seemed to catch it up. Then she came down head first.

Her mate turned one almost complete somersault in midair, and, without a word of protest, followed her to earth.

And the farmer smiled, and cheating old Fate, too, did a grin, but it was Cucullus really who had got the laugh on them both, because that egg she had just palmed off was her tenth.

She had got off her full clutch, and after that nothing mattered. There will be more camouflaged cuckoos next year.

INDIAN METHOD OF SCALPING

by **Lewis Appleton Barker**

THE exact method used by Indians in scalping may not be of general knowledge. The scalping knife was a weapon very similar to the well-known bowie knife. As a rule, the victim had been shot, or killed, or at least stunned by the blow of a hatchet. Sometimes the entire scalp was removed; while again, only a portion thereof was taken from the back part of the head—which accounts, partially, for so many surviving the operation.

The savage placed the point of his knife on the forehead at the roots of the hair, and with a surgeon's dexterity and, apparently, knowledge, made a circular incision around the head.

When the victim had short hair, he would lift a lappet of the skin, seize it between his teeth, and tear it roughly from the skull. If, on the contrary, the unfortunate person had flowing locks, as in the case of women, he would twist it around his hand, baring the skull with a sudden jerk.

There was, some years ago, in the window of Carson's store in Los Angeles, a gruesome exhibit offered for sale, in the form of a woman's scalp with very long hair, said to be that of one of the victims of the Mountain Meadow Massacre.

The scalps, with the hair left thereon, were then tanned, and often so marked that the owners could immediately tell when and where they were obtained, and whether of men or women. When, in 1759, Major Rogers destroyed and burned the chief village of the St. Francis Indians, there was discovered an enormous quantity of scalps, all of which were stretched on small hoops. Many of them had been covered with comically painted hieroglyphics.

THE FLUSHER

A Complete Novelette by Anthony M. Rud

HEADED for the southern boundary of Washington County, Alabama, and still two miles from the broad, shallow draw of sand and clay in which lay the trickle called Marble Creek, Jem Rast came upon Rabbit. Searched him out, in fact, for Rabbit at that moment was enduring a furious thrashing at hands of his shinny-maddened master—a beating which would have killed many a lesser dog, and which had as cause nothing that the Rabbit could help. The cursing rose almost to a shriek.

Rast halted his boiling Ford, shut off the engine and listened a space of seconds to the stream of oaths, gasps and thwacks. Then he clambered down, strode from the sand road into the fire-gutted scrub and came upon the scene he had visualized. A Cajan, a knotted club and a dog. A dog, probably of pointer breed, white with chocolate ears and head, slight fleckings of steel-gray through his coat—and ugly welts over gaunt ribs, from which blood welled and clotted. A dog that did not whimper, but gasped.

"What's wrong?" queried Rast briefly and unemotionally.

No pity stirred in his soul. Dogs were perhaps the least offending animals against which he cherished feud, however. Mankind, horses, dogs. Had a bob-cat been tearing the Rabbit's throat Rast would have watched the battle, then slain the bob-cat for its skin.

The Cajan was startled. For a time, as the dog cowered motionless, near to insensible, he desisted. His speech—next to unrenderable at best—was thickened with poisonous distillation. Rast listened. Business had taken him through the breadth and half the length of this charred, fire-swept county. He had dealt with some Cajans—those few who held actual title to their ruined acres. He understood.

In brief the story of Rabbit was this: Eighteen months before Nancy, the Cajan's pointer bitch, delivered a litter of five pups. Six weeks later, in the great fire of March, 1919, she and four of her offspring perished. Rabbit survived because he was slung in the ox-cart when the family fled.

The Cajan family, after squatting some months beyond Marble Creek where the woods had not burned, ventured back. There would be no pine-pitch to gather and sell to the owners of turpentine stills, no wood save charred remnants of stumps, and little fertility in the ground. Yet they returned. Such is homing instinct. How they had existed the intervening year must be left to surmise of those familiar with the meager and desperate makeshifts of famine countries.

Man and dog were nearly starved. Yet the man was drunk. Rast sneered as he heard mention of a wife and family.

Rabbit never had smelled out a covey of birds before this morning. Seventeen months old, he had been raised hit-or-miss in a region from which wild turkey, grouse and quail had emigrated. Of training the

"The Flusher," copyright, 1923, by Anthony M. Rud.

Rabbit had none. Natural to him were the deadening aromatic stenches of fire-wasted forest, strange and marvelous the warming scents of chlorophyll and sap in grasses, shrubs and tiny treelets rising from the black blanket of the only world he had known.

Birds? The Cajan never had troubled his head over birds. There couldn't be any. Quail nests had been destroyed. The few adult survivers now were at home in another county. Turkey and grouse had gone. Save for process of gradual encroachment upon boundaries turning from black to green, there never would be birds. Years, perhaps, must elapse before game could be shot and spitted again.

A shinny-running job, hazardous beyond the desires of white trash or woods negroes, brought him nearer the border of unburned sub-tropic jungle this day. Quail had encroached. Before daylight he heard them whistling their *poo-wheets* back on a branch which had not been destroyed completely.

Rabbit whirled, turning as if to stone with forepaw upraised as he smelled hot scent. What was this strange, salivating odor—a pungency which raised a surge of unknown instincts within him? The urge said, "Freeze." It said, "Go." He swept forward.

From beneath his feet nine whirring, fluttering birds arose. The Rabbit understood vaguely—but with bounding muscles and lolling tongue. These were what he was to pursue.

He had flushed that covey and earned a beating from the Cajan, who had not been near enough to "peel" a single bird—yet who saw and hungered. Again a covey was raised, and the Rabbit flushed as before. The beating this time was unmerciful. It was interrupted only by the advent of Rast.

"Untrained, eh?" commented the newcomer. "How old is he?"

"Year'n a half!"

"Um, pretty old. Still, it won't get you anything to kill him. I'll give you a dollar."

Jem Rast drew from his pocket the two silver half-dollars remaining there—last unit of the three thousand and more of ready cash he had taken northward—and clinked them.

The Cajan hesitated.

"Fo' him?"

"Yes."

The half-dollars clinked. One spun in the air, deftly caught.

"He wuth mo'——"

A crafty, haggling gleam appeared. But the Cajan, uncognizant as yet, faced a past master of the art of bargaining—a man who knew how to diagnose ignorance and greed, and who yielded never a jot to either.

"One dollar is my price."

Rast made as if to turn back. "You were going to kill him."

His indifference was far from assumed. Money instinct which keeps some men ever striving toward fortune even when the goal itself once has been won—and despised—whispered compellingly that this dog, properly trained, would be valuable, however.

Also, Jem Rast had a superstition; when investing a certain sum, retention of any rebate was a hoodoo. Back in the old days when he had marshaled tens of thousands as easily as now hundreds lay at command, he had rid his grasp of rebate dollars as fast as they could be blown for something ephemeral. This dollar was about the same; it was to have gone for another day's provisions, which, because of some lucky bargaining, he would not need.

"Aw, all ri'. Gimme the dollar. The dawg's nawthin' but a —— *nigaud*."

Deliberately Rast clinked the two silver pieces again, sneering inwardly at the bestial covetousness conquering the Cajan's drunkenness. Then he dropped the money in the other's palm, bent forward and thrust strong hands beneath the dog's chest. A shiver passed through the rack of bones and skin. Then quiet. These hands were different. They did not caress, but neither did they torture.

Silent, Rast raised his acquisition. Tawny yellow eyes opened, gazing up at him in infinite mournfulness. Then they slitted. Something close to a sigh told that the Rabbit, at least, was ready to trust himself to any one else.

"Sho!"

The exclamation, bursting from lips of the Cajan, caused Rast to halt, turning indifferently. He saw recognition, anger—something near to consternation.

"Well?"

"Yo'—yo's *him!* —— ef yo' ain't!" cried the Cajan. "Yo's Jem Rast, the misuh!"

Slight grimace, Rast's nearest approach

to a smile, tugged his compressed lips at hearing this appellation. The fools, calling him miser! Why, a miser was a man who loved money. He, Rast, *hated* money only slightly less than he hated men and their hypocrisies!

"Yes?"

"Yes, yo' is! I done seen yo' befoh! And I don't make no bargains with the —— who skinned my paw! I ——"

"Go buy your half-gallon of poison!" spat Rast contemptuously. "This sale is closed!"

And with that he stalked away, not looking back until he had laid Rabbit upon the lap-robe beside him in the Ford. The Cajan had not followed. He still stood indecisive. As starter whirred, bringing snorting explosions from the game little motor, he licked dry, flabby lips and swung about toward a shack where shinny was sold. In a week he scarcely would remember that he had not killed the Rabbit.

Back at the cypress-walled bungalow situated upon the wooded hill above Turpentine Bend, Rast installed dog, rug and all before the open hearth of living-room. Choly Fun Yen kept a fat-pine fire blazing here night and day throughout the cold months.

Rast went over the dog's body carefully, examining cuts and bruises. The Rabbit was in terrible condition—yet more from systematic starvation, which had wasted him into something more pathetic than a skeleton, than from damage inflicted by the Cajan's club. Deep gashes there were, and bruises which would make the Rabbit favor his two forelegs through many a day to come yet Rast wisely attempted no medication. Nature had given the Rabbit a tongue aseptic and curative.

Rast called the Chinaman.

"Choly," he asked, "you savvy fat him up? Allee same puppy you keep for feast back in Tien-Tsin?"

The Celestial nodded, grinning. Though his employer looked stern as ever it pleased Choly to interpret the command as kind of a subtle joke. Also he liked to see Rast adopting a dog. Time had been in the big household up north when the master had smiled, had romped with collies, had hitched Cavendish Royal, the staid, reliable Newfoundland, to a tiny cart which was driven about the estate by a laughing, blue-eyed imp who lisped imperative commands at her "g'eat big hothie!"

Choly Fun Yen knew what he knew. Though Rast had offered, at that tragic time to release the servant from a contract calling for two more years of service, Choly declined. In spite of the master's corrosive bitterness, poured into ears of the Oriental as the only representative of humankind to whom Rast talked, Choly possessed his own ideas of duty. Even when his contract expired he stayed on, adding to official duties of valet, service as cook and housekeeper, sometimes whispering strange, troubled things to his joss on the pine-stump back of the kitchen, and sometimes squatting there silent for hours, filling and refilling the long-stemmed, tiny pipe.

"Three times a week he gets meat scraps, cooked," directed Rast. "Once a week a fresh bone with just a little raw meat on it. No potato—that is likely to bring on distemper. The rest of table scraps he may have. Feed him as much as he wants, but feed him only once a day after he picks up. Today and tomorrow I'll see to him. We'll make a real dog of him in two or three months."

"Velly good!" nodded Choly happily.

He filled a deep pan with water, setting it beside the range for Rabbit's use. That afternoon he sang.

RABBIT stirred from lethargy induced by weakness, and heat of grateful fire, to lap the milk and chew a handful of crackers Rast gave him first. Then he lay back again, golden eyes slitting as they contemplated the orange-yellow flame of pine-knots blazing behind the wire screen. By and by ravenous, insatiable appetite would awaken, yet now the Rabbit was content to accept quietude and warmth—blinking in vague wonderment as to how he had escaped the brutal man whom he had known as master. This other——

For a long time Rabbit tried to turn his eyes to the far side of the room where, at a table beneath a green-shaded lamp, his grim, austere rescuer sat with ledger, pen and a pile of creased documents which represented fruits of his recent trip upcountry, warranty deeds not yet to be recorded, for which in each case Rast had tendered contract to *give* a deed if the amount of his loan were repaid with interest at expiration of the stated time. Until

proved wrong, he considered every loan a sale. Through seventeen years of cynically frank bargaining with dwellers of the woods—men who for the most part considered themselves badly treated by fortune but whom Rast denounced to their faces in caustic terms far otherwise—he had recorded more than half of the deeds given him in exchange for his cash.

Never had he stooped to dissimulation. Men hoaxed themselves, the optimistic idiots! Even his worst enemy—and Rast possessed only enemies outside Choly Fun Yen, whom he considered something in the light of a superior, indispensable cog, in the electric washing machine which was run each Monday morning—admitted that Jem Rast never lied or took greater advantage than that of which he gave contemptuous warning in advance.

He didn't need to lie. As in poker, where men who tell the truth concerning their hands never are believed, customers sniffed or squirmed uneasily until out of his presence, banking on their stars instead of their intelligences.

Then, although Jem Rast rarely attempted to drive home a lesson, considering mankind hopeless and despicable, they hated him worst when prophecies were fulfilled to the letter.

Twice he had been waylaid. Once he killed his man, a fool with sufficient courage to step out into the open and from trigger end of shotgun tell Jem Rast just why he was to die. The fool scarcely had seen the flash of right hand into arm-pit holster, or glimpsed the flash which sped the slug. Jem Rast never had been west of Wind Cave; he learned snap-shooting with a pistol as a boy in the galleries of cheap amusement parks on Staten Island.

The second attacker fired from ambush, letting go both barrels. Then he fled, to cover a week without daring to go near his fellows. That was why Rast lacked a left ear and in its place owned a puckered scar extending from cheek-bone straight back across temple. The wound he had doused stoically with iodine after picking dizzied way homeward.

RABBIT still was lying with head turned over fore-leg, and eyes, dully grateful, contemplating the man, when Rast went in to his lonely dinner—served at eight according to tradition long established, a tradition which took no stock of the fact that half of the inhabitants of Turpentine Bend, below, had supped two hours since, and were now preparing for bed.

Rast grimly adhered to the schedule of old time, and the Chinaman raised no question—though now he marveled often that the man could sit, motionless for most part save for occasional puffs from his blackened brier, straight on until the stroke of midnight sounded from the onyx mantel clock. Long since, save on occasions when he stole out to study his master through the window-pane, Choly was in bed, his dishes finished and a load of fat pine brought in against the morning's fire.

This night he sat up, back in a corner room, inked pen and sheet of paper before him. He wrote no word, however. Sometime—yet sure instinct supplemented calm reason in denying that the time for casting aside his master's wishes had arrived.

When Rast, carefully selecting such remnants of his dinner as he believed the sick dog could digest—and filling a soup plate with milk—arose, he found Rabbit crouching, head pressed against the thin rug and whole body flattened into mute expression of fear. The dog lay directly behind Rast's chair—though he had crept up, an inch at a time, and silently. Only the Chinaman had known, and Choly, concealing knowledge beneath set, habitual mask of deference, passed over the recumbent body without seeming to see.

"Hm! Should think you'd like it better in there by the fire right now, dog," said Rast coldly. "Since you're able to walk, though, come out-doors for a time."

He led the way out to the grassless area surrounding the bungalow, there to light and smoke part of a pipe while Rabbit limped spiritless about the enclosure, sniffing at posts, trees and the fence from instinct and habit.

Given the food and drink, however, Rabbit ate with quickening appetite. The effort of gulping seemed to convulse his gullet, chest and projecting ribs. Always the golden eyes followed Rast as the latter, forgetting the dog completely, moved about preparing for another night with memories.

II

TWO days Rast fed Rabbit increasing quantities of meat and scraps, then turned him over as matter of course to Choly, as arranged. The wounds were healing. A week would show change in Rabbit's angular contours. In matters insignificant or unimportant to human happiness the Three Sisters allow sound planners to win their piker bets. Therefore Rabbit, of no importance whatever to Jem Rast—or so he thought—would shape out, submit to training and later sell for a price somewhere between one hundred and two hundred dollars. One week dragged by, then another.

Rast attached no significance to the fact that Rabbit, from the first ignoring the silent, efficient Chinaman almost as the master himself ignored, bolted food, then dashed out to the front fence, there to submit in patience as Choly snapped him to the chain which slipped on a wire the length of the lot.

When Rast approached in his car, or astride the sway-backed roan he used for trips impossible to automobile, or on foot, Rabbit flattened his ears, wriggled hind quarters and breathed noisily in welcome.

The man failed to see. He was wont to throw wide the gate, stride through at even pace, and look to neither right nor left. At actual presence Rabbit became silent. Golden eyes seemed to darken into brown. The tail halted midway in oscillation. He stood tense, ready to cringe in subservience or—impossible suggestion of instinct!—to wag himself into canine delirium of joy at even a word or pat of hand, until Rast was by. Then he stalked silently after the deliberately indifferent man.

Rabbit was filling out. Muscles never perceptibly developed under previous system of chronic malnutrition, took shape beneath his coat. Head came up straighter on his shoulders. Thirty-inch tail lost its droop. Hair, scrubbed, combed out and brushed glossy by Choly Fun Yen lay straight and smooth to lines of strengthening torso.

"Labbit, he's —— funny fellah!" soliloquized Choly, ostensibly addressing his charge. "Eatum chow from China boy, but no-see-um China boy elsetimes."

But strangely enough, when slanted eyes appraised the dumb worship of Rabbit for the man whom Choly himself loved, China boy cracked mask of impassivity in a wide smile. Yeast was working.

One night, as Rast sat marking a large-scale county map in red ink, Rabbit left his couch by the fire. It was first a camouflage of stretch, with long, brown-spotted paws extended half a yard nearer to the squeaky swivel; then an inching up of hind quarters, a pause in which Rabbit kept his muzzle flat to the rug, waiting, dreading—and then another stretch.

In twenty minutes, as the round yellow eyes never ceased their adoring, fearful scrutiny of the man's back, Rabbit had reached the branching chair-support behind which Rast's left shoe was hitched. A long pause ensued, the silence of which was broken only by occasional scratchings of pen on calendered paper. Each line denoted boundary of a tract either secured, or one on which a loan had been made.

Inch by inch the dog's muzzle approached. He was tensed as for a bound in pursuit of quail, rigid. Tongue lolled out and downward. Hot breath fell first on sole of shoe, then on upper, then on tight-stretched sock above.

Rast straightened. He made no sound. Pen was laid quietly on ink-stand. Gaze lifted, to fasten upon the wall before him, where a framed Pointillist daub purporting to portray a woman of Avignon, was hung.

He did not see the picture. Below, he was acutely conscious of the tickling suspiration, quickened now as in excitement. Then something chill, round and soft pressed stealthily against sheer covering of ankle—the fool dog's *nosel* A pause. Something warm and moist wriggled against him. Rabbit had thrust out his tongue in first mute tribute to the unrequited affection burning in his dog's breast.

"——!" observed Jem Rast aloud—albeit with not quite the fervor such unaccustomed expletive seemed to demand.

He arose, carefully refraining from noticing Rabbit. He gathered up the map, corked the ink-bottle and thrust papers into their rightful drawers, locking the desk. Then, when he felt a decent interval had elapsed, he faced toward the closed swinging door which separated kitchen and Choly's quarters from rest of the house.

"Choly!" he called.

The Chinaman, who at that moment

had been squatting, engaged in his interminable *sinnipan*—solitaire played with cards, matches and navy beans upon the checkered squares of floor linoleum—leaped up and answered.

"Take this dog out and chain him!" directed Rast coldly. "It's mild weather. He doesn't need to be inside."

Glimmer of disappointment tinged the Oriental's expression, but only for a fraction of a moment. Then he was bowing understanding and leading away the reluctant Rabbit—a dog all a-tingle with exultation and canine joy. He had touched his master, and had not been beaten.

Beatings were to come, however, though not for some time. Jem Rast knew the value of punishment; he never wasted its efficacy by applying it where other stimulant or corrective would do. He was cold-blooded enough in the matter. If a dog didn't understand you well enough to obtain a glimmering of your intent, you could flay him alive without result. Therefore, by talking to Rabbit—greeting him frostily, directing him to perform simple tricks like fetching a stick of wood which had been thrown, or teaching him to lie on his back at command—Rast established understanding and confidence.

Rabbit, striving with might and main to please, gave over leaping up at his master after the first few rebuffs and threw what seemed to be the abounding energy of a puppy into endeavors to fulfill Jem Rast's commands. He was slow in learning, yet managed to grasp several fundamentals. In five weeks he was stalking gravely at heel when Rast walked out through the piney woods. And he had given over the habit of cringing when Rast looked at him.

Upstanding, filled out heavily in great neck and chest, lean of waist and flank, and with spare legs showing play of sinew which promised speed next to that of whippet, beneath sleek, oily coat, Rabbit, in spite of his scars and the slight limp which remained, looked the part of bench-show contender in his class.

Rast regarded him with satisfaction. Next year, when tourists flocked down to spray the scrub with rain of chilled shot, Rabbit would sell to advantage. Tail-end of this season would suffice for training. At three years of age, conditioned, broken to his duties toward a sportsman, and with fear of unreasoned beatings, removed, Rabbit should bring a minimum of two hundred dollars—perhaps three.

Thus the conscious mental processes of a man who long had foresworn friendship with even the least of God's creatures.

RABBIT'S destiny was not to await another winter, however. In the last week of January Rast, taking down his expensive double-barrel from its case, removed the woolen plug which had held the coating of grease in the barrel, and cleaned out the gummed accumulations of a year. Slipping a handful of twelve-gage shells in the pocket of his hunting jacket—a garment worn only thrice during his whole stay in the woods—he clumped out in heavy boots to the yard where Rabbit was chained.

"Know what this means, Rabbit?" he demanded, thrusting down the weapon.

Rabbit quivered with excitement. Faint, wiped out so far as human senses were concerned by two cleanings and a year of disuse, a scent of smokeless powder still clung about that double cylinder of nickeled steel. The dog leaped up on hind legs, yelping with desire. When a man, carrying one of these acrid-smelling contraptions, was dressed in olive duck, it meant that the Rabbit himself had a duty to perform.

Exact nature of that duty was vague in the canine brain, yet he knew something was expected of him. He leaped free when Rast unsnapped the chain, capering, watching his master.

"Heel!" came the curt command.

Somewhat crestfallen, Rabbit obeyed—after a repetition of the word. Rast, paying him no more attention, strode out through the gate, down a slope of hill which led through Bay Riedeman's sand-pear orchard and into the fringe of piney woods lying beyond. He kept Rabbit closely to heel as he passed through a half-mile of this strip, steadily descending.

Finally, on a marshy hillside where leather boots sank ankle-deep as he splashed down toward the open draw situated beneath, Rast thrust a pair of shells into the gun-breach.

"All right. Go out and hunt 'em up!"

Gesture of arm reinforced the command.

With a bound Rabbit was away. He circled, nose sniffing in direction of every hummock, every clump of huckleberry or sumac. Here somewhere, probably in the

coarse grass which curled about his flanks, was hidden what he sought. He searched avidly, with the excitement of loyalty and months of restraint.

Half-way up the draw, with Jem Rast plodding watchfully behind, Rabbit came to a sudden stop in mid-gallop. Warm covey-scent, borne down-wind, had smitten him.

"Steady, boy!" called Jem Rast, understanding the partial freeze—muzzle and one paw uplifted, but tail still wagging. "Take it easy now!"

He couched shotgun across left hip and got behind the dog.

"All right now, easy up on them—you haven't got them yet—a little farther, Rabbit. Steady! Steady!"

Shouted caution went in vain. Rabbit cat-footing upwind, caught a new, pungent scent of birds. All restraint—an instinctive thing anyway, one not imposed by the orthodox command which he did not know—vanished. With an impetuous rush Rabbit followed the tantalizing, compelling odor.

In thirty feet he was among them. A whirring, startled rise sent a fan-shaped spread of fourteen quail out across the draw—with Rabbit close behind and almost clutching in his jaws the single, low-flying bird which Jem Rast otherwise might have killed.

Rast did not fire. Lips compressed to a line. Rabbit was a flusher, indeed. Well, that was the fault of training, not instinct. He had found the covey quickly enough. Rast would have to provide the training.

THEY hunted no more that afternoon; Rast gave up even the pursuit of stragglers from that lone covey. Just as a test of something else he fired one barrel of his gun. The Rabbit, galvanized into furious activity in an instant, crashed about through the scrub, nose to the ground, like a dog possessed. Rast watched a minute, then called Rabbit to heel.

"Flushes, but will retrieve—probably," he reflected. "Hm, maybe I'd save time and trouble if I just turned him over to Bert Kepple."

Kepple, a faded, almost chinless planter of hulking frame, whose blinking, watery eyes gave the impression of weariness borne with inane patience, had a way with dogs. He trained them better than any other man in three counties; it was his single developed talent. Bird dogs given into his care for a few weeks lost all their faults of commission and acquired each necessary quality save that of sensitive nose.

This last even Bert Kepple could not bestow; heredity only was able to supply it. Granted that much as a beginning, however, and a fairly young dog, Bert would turn out a finished performer—at a fee of from ten to twenty dollars. Had he possessed a rich clientele, this range would have had for maximum at least one hundred dollars.

Kepple would be over shortly, too, Rast told himself cynically enough. Less than a month remained before the deed on the final third of his neglected patrimony was due to be recorded. Rast cared nothing for the shack in which Bert lived; the first twister from the Gulf would blow it into wreckage. The eighty acres upon which it stood, though, lay in exact center of a section title to all the rest of which now was vested in Jem Rast—and which soon he would have cleared, divided into five-acre plots planted in sand-pears, pecans and citrus fruit for sale to investors from the north.

In six years Bert Kepple had cashed in on his inheritance, wasting the money part on expensive liquor procured from the fruit-boats at Mobile and part on abortive farming efforts. No matter how much energy he summoned for planting of corn, soy beans or potatoes when fit of remorse was on him, harvest thus far each time had found his starved razorback hogs and gaunt cattle reduced in numbers by a few head, and fields surrendered to weeds, field larks and carrion crows.

Each time, as the day of reckoning approached, he had visited Rast, declaring an intention to "turn over a new leaf" and asking for an extension on his contract. Both times Rast refused contemptuously. He had no faith in resolves of weak men, and no desire for such faith.

True, Bert Kepple was not worth crushing as a man. In other circumstances Rast might have ignored him completely, letting him follow a more difficult road to destruction; yet this one plot of land, partly cleared, was the last increment in Rast's project. Once before, on much smaller scale, Rast had developed and sold a similar tract in another county. This huge undertaking would tax all resources available to him, and would keep him busy some years. He had

no intention of coining money for any simpleton like Kepple, merely by bringing in a great influx of settlers to occupy surrounding acres.

Days passed, yet the younger man did not put in an appearance. Rast observed caustically to Choly Fun Yen that without doubt Kepple now had learned his lesson; that he would know begging for an extension of time could win him nothing.

The Celestial listened impassively. Though often the recipient of such half-confidences during times when Rast expanded a trifle under influence of maturing schemes, Choly offered no comment. Likewise, though he suspected his master due for a great surprize from young Kepple, Choly kept whatever knowledge he possessed strictly to himself.

Half of the month dragged along. Rast, drawing in most of his nets now except for certain preparations for future operations in the county to the north, was less busy than for some time. He spent considerable time with Rabbit, talking to the dog and teaching him strict obedience.

Rabbit acquired usual tricks, such as sitting up and begging for pieces of sugar, and fetching Rast's heavy boots from the clothes-press, after surprizingly little tuition. The man deliberately ignored the fact, quelling every move toward demonstrative affection, yet Rabbit, stiff and apparently hard of hearing whenever Choly gave him command, quivered in every muscle with leashed eagerness as Rast spoke.

A glorious flame had come into the golden eyes. Rabbit worshiped. Though he made mistakes, he leaped clumsily to obey anything the master asked—almost before the words had left Rast's tongue.

Choly Fun Yen one evening watched the antics. Rast, chill and impersonal as always, was teaching the dog to go to the exact spot in any room designated. Rabbit finally got drift of the game. When directed, he lumbered out to clump down under dining-room table, behind the overstuffed davenport, or in the hallway. Always his eyes remained on Rast, however—and he returned to the man's side at command with much more alacrity than he exhibited in leaving.

Once the Chinaman opened wide lips as if to speak, but thought better of it. He was very wise. Before retiring he stole out to light a single length of punk at foot of the ugly image on the pine-stump, and chuckle to himself as he mingled some of the maxims of Lao-Tze with the prayer of thanksgiving-and-hope-for-early-flowering-of-the-lotus.

Rast went beyond ordinary training tricks because of a discovery which he made. In cleaning up the rooms, Choly Fun Yen learned he had to chain Rabbit outside. The dog, in Rast's absence, assumed proprietorship over each shoe, each article of linen discarded by his master—even over the pajamas which Choly wished to fold neatly and thrust beneath the pillow. He growled savagely, exhibiting bared teeth.

When Rast heard, he became thoughtful. Then the brain which sought always the practical rendering of anything new bore a suggestion. Instructing the Chinaman, he gave the latter his cap.

Choly called Rabbit outdoors, tossed down the cap and started to voice a command. He did not get a chance to finish. Rabbit had swooped upon the circle of cloth, and borne it to the front of the house. There, scratching on the screen, he waited until Rast opened the door.

When the man took the article, speaking curt commendation, Rabbit was overjoyed. Here was something he could do for his demigod. Forthwith he began the herculean task of dragging to Rast every object in the house upon which lay the scent of the man's touch.

Rast was forced to reprimand sharply before the dog's afflatus vanished. Then Rast, wondering himself how far the same principal could be applied, brought one of Choly's heelless slippers, tendered it to Rabbit and directed that the dog take it instantly to the servant.

Patently Rabbit did not understand. Working in any way for Choly had not entered his calculations. Still, bearing that slipper to the unimportant yellow man surely seemed what the master desired.

Rast, detachedly patient and determined, persisted. And at last Rabbit obeyed, sulking out into the kitchen to drop the rattan slipper before Choly, who thanked him courteously. More than that; during ensuing days Rast found that any article which the Chinaman owned need only be given to Rabbit. Without command, even, he brought it to Choly. It was rather a senseless game, yet so long as it seemed to please the master, Rabbit was willing.

As reward he never received more than occasional lump of sugar, and brief acknowledgment from Rast, yet so soul-hungry for an object of canine adoration had the Rabbit been, he learned to extract more solace and true happiness from mere approving inflection of voice than of old he had derived from all the Cajan's maudlin fits of petting.

Once Rast went to sleep in his chair, allowing one hand to trail to the rug. Rabbit discovered the fact and crept up just as he had crept that first evening he had dared to touch his rescuer. Ninety minutes then he lay immobile, scarcely breathing, with long muzzle couched in palm of the man he loved.

Rast opened his eyes, grimacing in distaste at what he deemed a sign of approaching senility. He jerked away his hand roughly, frowning down at the dog, and arose—growling something unintelligible. Yet at doorway of the bedroom he turned, glancing back. Then he strode inside, banging the door with unnecessary force. It had been his —— fool wish to go back there and apologize with a pat.

TWICE more Rabbit went hunting. For the first occasion, an early morning start after quail in really splendid shooting-country, Rast brought along with them in the Ford a sinister contrivance of metal and leather to which was attached a forty-foot length of braided sash-cord.

This was a "checker," a leather collar through which were set half-inch brads in continuous row—projecting *inward*. Each brad was sharp pointed, but not dangerous. It lay harmlessly against the skin of Rabbit's neck as he circled over a forty-foot radius of field. He learned speedily that pulling against the cord meant a painful dig; so while blood was cool he proved tractable enough.

For half an hour, working the fields in closer fashion than would have yielded speediest results, they proceeded, the dog circling with nose to ground and choosing his own course, and the man plodding behind holding fast to end of the cord which was looped about his wrist.

Then came hot scent of a covey only five yards from Rabbit. He swung sidewise, almost freezing as he had done on the previous occasion.

"Steady, boy!" cracked the command from Rast as the cord tautened.

Whining cry of eagerness, almost stifled, was Rabbit's only reply. Pungency of the huddled birds was in his nostrils, urging, demanding that he pursue. He lunged forward. A great gulp of the appetizing scent came to him.

Behind him the man was shouting commands. On his neck, as he strove frantically to give chase, six separate sharp pains made themselves known. Yet the Rabbit paid no heed. He dug toes into the grass and sand, struggling to go. The brads cut deeper.

All at once a huge covey rose. Rast refrained from shooting. Instead, gripping the leash still more tightly, he laid down shotgun and dragged the dog to him. Rabbit gave in, yelping in sudden realization of his pain.

Rast cuffed him soundly, the while explaining in forceful terms exactly what he had expected. The treatment seemed cruel even to him, yet he knew that in it lay Rabbit's only hope for proficiency and worth as a bird dog.

"And now, if you've got that idea implanted," said Rast grimly at length, "we'll try to scare up another covey—no, we'll tackle a few of those stragglers. I think they lit over near edge of that branch."

Follow-up scent was obtained on two quail, then on the third of a trio which had lit almost together. In each case Rabbit repeated his same tragic performance of misunderstanding in spite of all Rast could do. Nearness of quarries seemed to change the anxious, sensitive dog, who tried his uttermost to understand and even anticipate the master's commands, into a senseless creature of unthralled instinct.

After the third cuffing and lecture, when Rast removed the brads, Rabbit lay cowering and utterly miserable. He gasped that same dry fashion of protest against hurt—a sound which now told also of deepest despair at the evident displeasure of the one man whom he most desired to satisfy.

What was wrong the Rabbit could not know. Born in him had been a desire to pursue living game—not so much to kill and eat, for he was not hungry, but merely to secure—and the artificial behavior which man has superimposed upon that instinct for his own ends never had been made a part of the dog during early, adaptable months. All of which he was certain now was that Rast was stern and disapproving.

Somehow he had failed in what the man expected, and this after he had tried so hard.

Rast, persistent, attempted to search out another straggler further down the branch. It was useless now, however. Rabbit caught no scent. He did not even hunt. Spiritless he followed, not circling nor even sniffing the wind, with the sash-cord loose. His head hung, and the stiff, straight length of tail drooped from its muscled line. Further attempt at hunting for that day evidently was useless.

Choly Fun Yen, after first glance at the ugly cuts circling the dog's neck, muttered something short and bitter to himself. The glance which he flashed from narrow, slanted eyes at Jem Rast held something other than tolerance, wisdom and devotion for the first time—though many occasions for deep personal offense had existed before in the twenty years of his service.

Still, a man who for sake of killing tiny feathered things—mere mouthfuls of food beside the great roasts of beef, veal, pork and lamb prepared in his kitchen—could treat thus one who loved him—well, that man was beyond Choly Fun Yen. After all C'hiu Hsieh Lu had known the truth of white-skinned foreign devils. Who or what loved them they blasted.

III

FORTY-EIGHT hours before his contract for deed was due to expire, Bert Kepple crossed the southern arm of Marble Creek and made his way uphill toward Jem Rast's bungalow—a habitation which six years before had been bid in at mortgage price after death of its owner.

This was a different Bert Kepple from the hang-dog, dissipated youth last interviewed by Rast—just as the farm west beyond the creek now scarcely could have been recognized by the man who had lent money upon it. Choly Fun Yen, who during his master's absence at loan-making in the fire-swept region had fished the black pools of Marble Creek's south branch for large-mouthed bass and had tramped the district beyond in search of ground-nuts and other queer delicacies with which to stuff his finny quarries, had witnessed the double transformation but said nothing to Rast.

If the latter insisted upon remaining apart from his customers and their holdings during the life of deed contracts, exhibiting absolute indifference as to whether the loaners lived or died, failed or succeeded, it was Rast's own business.

Choly therefore received the planter with his usual courteous bow. From his masklike smile none could tell how Choly sized up that new firmness of lip and chin, that anxious—almost belligerent—light in eyes which seemed to have deepened in color and lost once for all their disconcerting habit of blinking.

"Is Rast to home?" blurted out Kepple. "I got to see him."

The Chinaman shook his head, replying that his master had been to Rinton, a neighboring town, that morning, but was expected back for one o'clock dinner. Probably a half-hour. Would the honored visitor compose himself and wait?

The visitor would. He sat in one of the uncomfortable, straight-backed chairs of the living room—chairs which Rast reserved for men who came to borrow money. Kepple shifted in anxious unease. He stood up, glanced out the window, down the red-clay hill-road toward town, but saw no sign of Rast's roadster. He sat down, heavy work-shoes crossing, then moving forward and back. Once Kepple drew forth a grimy manila evelope from an inside vest-pocket, but thrust it back.

The servant retired. A few minutes later he returned with a pot of steeping tea and dainty pecan cakes, which he offered courteously. Choly would have liked to have extended an invitation to dinner, but such amenity was strictly forbidden in Rast's household.

Bert Kepple nodded awkward acknowledgment, toyed with one of the cakes, gulped a swallow or two of the brew—an importation of Choly's own which had been grown on a cloud-covered mountain in far away Yunnan, and which cost wages of a quarter-month for each pound—but he scarcely seemed to know whether he was drinking dish-water or nectar of the yellow gods.

Minutes ticked by. Bert Kepple was up now, striding uneasily back and forth. He had nerved himself for this interview, for the telling of a true story which could not help piercing the shell of Rast's merciless method. Waiting was unbearable. It brought up images of his own miserable self, twice refused on previous occasions which might seem, to Rast, identical with this.

Choly, humming and seeming not to see as he *flap-flapped* his heelless way in and out from kitchen to dining-room, at last slipped out the back way to the transverse wire upon which Rabbit was chained. Releasing the dog, he brought him in to Kepple.

"Labbit, he is a good dog," observed Choly calmly, "onlee he scares up quails allee-same too quick!"

And he removed the plain collar, exhibiting the partially healed wounds beneath.

Nothing else in the wide world could have granted Kepple even momentary distraction at that time, yet now he bent forward, examined the marks of brads, stroked Rabbit's velour-soft ears and understood. Here was a dog full-grown, a splendid specimen, which Rast, a harsh amateur, was endeavoring to train. Butchery!

Bert sat down, called the dog close to him and began to talk—the while touching caressing finger-tips almost reverently to the great, supple curves of muscle bunching and flowing beneath brushed coat. The man failed to win as much as an oscillation of the long, expressive tail, yet Rabbit did not move away. This was not his master and never could be, yet Kepple's scent was not unpleasant—nor was his quiet touch and soothing voice. Rabbit had been petted not at all. In a way he liked it though it puzzled him.

And Kepple, born with the talent of persuading animals to do exactly what he desired—though rarely winning anxious devotion from any—in the time that elapsed before a struggling motor surmounted the red clay hill outside, had learned all of Rabbit's little bag of tricks. Also he was sure that in a fortnight—a week, perhaps—he could make Rabbit into one of the finest bird dogs in the State of Alabama.

Rast came in brusk, abrupt and hungry. He called to Choly—and then his glance fell upon Kepple, who was standing before the glowing hearth. Rabbit had come up to his master, forgetting the stranger.

"Oh, you here! Thought you'd crawl in sooner or later. What's the matter, booze run out? Never mind for a few minutes, Choly; I'll tend to Bert first. Won't be long. Sit down there—unless you'd prefer to take your medicine standing!" The last with wave toward the straight chair.

Corrosive contempt was in Rast's tone as usual. Quick eyes noted the sprucer appearance of his client, and also Bert's nervous lack of obsequiousness; yet Rast feigned insufficient interest. It was his invariable habit, when confronting any one seeking a favor, to arouse anger first. This made denunciation and denial more natural and easy.

"I ain't wishful of sittin' none," returned Kepple in a low, strained voice. "What I'm sayin' maybe ain't over in a second, though. Won't you be takin' it easy?

"No? Well, Mr. Rast, I got a funny proposition to put up to you. I'll see first if maybe you like it. It's about thet thar dog you been trainin' some. I seen the cuts on his neck. You was usin' a choker."

"Yes?" returned Rast, half in question. Actually he was surprized at the direction of the conversation.

"Ye-ah. You ain't got him goin' good yet? He's a flusher?"

"Yes." Rast was becoming impatient. "What of it?"

"Well, I'll tell you right quick, Mr. Rast. I'm hopin' to finish up his trainin' an' make a real dog out of him. O' course I charge a fee, but I got a bran' new guarantee for you an' him. I ask twenty-five bucks in advance an' I guarantee——"

"What? You want twenty-five, and in advance? Man, you're crazy! You've trained dogs for Hank Buffer, Thomasson, Brackett and a lot more of them for ten or fifteen a throw—paid afterward. What's the big idea?"

"I was jes' comin' to thet," pursued Kepple doggedly—albeit a tinge of hopelessness began to seep into his tone. "I got a new system, one maybe you'll cotton to. I take my pay in advance—twenty-five like I said. Then when I get the dog workin' good, I bring out the owner where I know is plenty birds. If in three hours by the watch he don't freeze on six coveys, the way I run him—retrievin' every bird thet's dropped—then I don't charge a cent!"

"You actually *return* the money, eh?" asked Rast, feigning credulity. "My, you must have confidence!"

"I have," muttered Kepple, understanding the approaching storm of ridicule—which was not to materialize exactly as he surmised.

"Well, I don't bargain that way," snapped Rast. "Something's given me a hunch concerning you. Why do you want that money all of a sudden, and in advance? Has it got something to do with our agreement?"

Kepple tried to ignore the pointed thrust.

"I'll fix him up good, sir!" he pleaded. "It'll be wuth every cent! You could sell——"

"Answer me! Speak up or get out!"

"Well— all right. I guess you ain't givin' me no other way." Kepple drew a long breath, and his boyish face seemed to harden. "I hate to do it, Rast, oncause you ain't been believin' me much when I come to you."

"I believe no one!"

"This time is mighty different, an' I got to tell you the whole blame thing," went on the young planter, resolutely passing over the rebuff. "Now is a time, I reckon, when even Jem Rast has got to size up different.

"You know me mighty well, Jem Rast, An' you got me figgered plumb right. I ain't wuth a hoot in ——, an' never was. This hyar ain't for me.

"It's my brother an' his wife an' his baby. They're here—with me at the shack. I've built on two more rooms. You see Ralph cain't walk. He got all bust up. An' Katie, she ain't strong enough to take in washin' or nuthin' like thet, besides take care of little Kitty."

A strange quiver showed for an instant in the muscle beside Jem Rast's cheek-bone.

"Katie—Kitty?" he echoed, for an instant astounded by poignant dart of pain. "Her name is Catherine?"

"Both of them. They calls the three-year-old Kitty. She's got yellow curls an' looks jes' like an angel—which is what her ma *is*!"

"Hmph!" snorted Jem Rast, in a second regaining his contemptuous sneer. "All men think that way. She's young and pretty then, of course. I mean the mother."

"Yes—well, no, maybe not."

Bert Kepple seemed undecided, though reverent. He flashed a queer side glance at Rast's countenance, then evidently thought his vagrant notion a sort of sacrilege, as he put it aside without mention.

"It's Ralph first, mister, really," he went on, pausing between each two words. "Then the others oncause'n they belongs to him.

"Ralph—'Roarin' Ralph,' maybe you heard o' him? He was race-drivin' for Vacclaugh Motors till last Decoration Day. A champion driver, too! You know the big race they hold then up at Indianapolis? Well, he got smashed—back all bust up, and suthin' else what makes him funny in the head. Doc says he ain't goin' to pull through the Winter."

The plain, unvarnished tale told by Bert Kepple was food in itself for romance. The brother, taking his share of the patrimony seven years before in shape of cash, had gone north, there to indulge his passion for luxury and speed until the day of penury dawned. At that time he took a job as driver for a new motor concern. Under his leadership, in five years of campaigning, the Vacclaugh Motor had become internationally known for speed and endurance. 250 miles without stop and at an average rate of 104 miles an hour, was his best win.

Then came the crash. He had married and was supporting a wife and child from the proceeds of his racing. No accident insurance. Disaster found him practically bankrupt. Even a small benefit staged by his comrades sufficed only to pay hospital bills, support his dependents for three months, and take them south—where his brother manfully promised to take care of them all. They came. In the family exchequer on landing at Turpentine Bend had been less than fifty dollars.

"Thet's five months agone," concluded Bert, his voice shaking a trifle in spite of new-found self-control. "Day followin' tomorrow the time on thet thar deed contract. I ain't askin' you no time extension. All I want is you to let me train Rabbit, an' pay me now the way I said."

For ten minutes Rast had not interrupted. Now he clicked shut the pen-knife with which he had been shaving a pencil.

"And is twenty-five dollars all you lack of being able to pay me my three hundred?" he queried dryly. "It seems, if that's the case, that you ought to be able to borrow elsewhere—particularly as you know I never cut edges in the least for any reason."

"No, 'tain't!" blurted out Kepple, desperate now. "I went an' blew most every cent right off, and I ain't made much. You know the sand-pears didn't sell much of any this year on account of the freight tie-up. Ralph had a little. I had some few dollars left. An' then, I done saved a bit."

"How much have you got?"

The youth was flushing in shame, reluctant, yet at end of his string. Counting money secured by sale of his hammerless shotgun—he had kept only a rusted old single-barrel which no one would buy—and every possession, he had scraped up one

hundred forty-odd dollars. Saving had been next to impossible since the advent of Ralph, his wife and the baby; yet he had accumulated a little.

Rast breathed easier. For a moment he had feared that this key acreage possibly might be lost to him! The loan, once repaid, would make him buy outright if he wanted the place—and Rast knew from experience that purchasing a land-poor Southerner's home often is more difficult than stripping the shirt from his back. Still, there was something yet to be explained. What connection could the twenty-five dollars have with repayment of the three hundred dollars and interest?

This took more prying, yet at last Rast had it. Trembling in a depth of self-hatred, and snapping away the tears of blinding shame which rose behind lids of his weak eyes, Kepple confessed that he had had to tell Catherine—Ralph's wife. Being sensitive, he put the best possible face on the matter, not even mentioning the name of the lender who held him in vise grip. Still, the woman understood. She had faced the compromises and makeshifts of sudden poverty. She had come bravely into the breach. With only one article of value left beside her suitcase—sold immediately—she offered that one thing, her diamond engagement ring. Aaron Bittner, owner of the dry-goods store, had agreed to pay one hundred and fifty dollars—half the worth of the ring.

All at once Rast laughed. It was too easy. These fools, to imagine that he cared for their troubles! Had he not suffered through his own?

It was a short laugh, dry and hard. He had the last plot of that section now. He said so.

As Bert Kepple listened, the color drained slowly from his face. He gasped. When Rast cut short, rising with intention of going in for the dinner now becoming cold, Kepple came before him, arms outstretched.

"Mr. Rast!" he pleaded piteously. "Oh, you cain't mean thet! It ain't for me, sir. I ain't nuthin,' an' what's comin' to me don't matter. It's Catherine and the kid—yes, an' Ralph. Don't you understand? He's done became helpless! She ain't able to——"

As the derision hardened to chill refusal, definite and unmistakable, Kepple's voice trailed in agony.

"No!" replied Rast in curt conclusion.

He gestured briefly in dismissal, yet strangely did not enter the dining-room.

Odd strengthening, a sheer, sinister quietude of hopelessness, had crept like apathy into the younger's features. Slowly he reached inside his vest, withdrawing a grimy manila envelope. This he crumpled into a ball. Sudden, fierce motion flung it at Rast.

"All right, Mr. Rast!" The words were hoarse, deeper intoned: "Thar's your ——ed contract! It ain't no use to me, cause I cain't—cain't pay. I jes' want to—say, though, Jem Rast—thet before you has thet thar deed recorded you make peace with your God if you got one—because afterwards you ain't goin' to have no chance, so help me God!"

Rast shrugged. He had listened to this threat many times before. He stood aside as the planter strode out away, fists clenched and muscle-rigid arms tensed at an angle from his sides.

"I'm going to take Rabbit a day or two more by myself," Rast called out to him before closing the door. "Maybe I'll let you handle him then—next week!"

CHOLY FUN YEN smoothed out the crumpled envelope containing Kepple's useless contract, placing it before Rast at table. Then the Chinaman brought in the silver soup tureen. Contrary to custom this time, however, he made no move toward the palmetto fan with which he was wont to chase the flies from the table.

Rast failed to notice. He was hungry, little disturbed by the scene just concluded. Of course those people would be discommoded more or less, but what of it? The ex-racer could go to the public infirmary in Mobile. The woman doubtless could get employment of some sort sufficient to keep herself and the child. Or she could put the baby in some institution.

He ladled out the soup, steam of which curled up fragrant to his nostrils. As he lifted the silver spoon toward his lips, however, hunching forward in hungry anticipation, yellow fingers closed upon his wrist.

"Eh, Choly?" he ejaculated, surprized.

The Oriental's face was stony.

"A fly—he light on your dish," he remarked. "Sometime, at food, plinces who lob other men think good idea it is to watch fly."

Rast saw the fly. It encroached upon white china rim of dish, walked rapidly forward and downward an inch to border of the soup. There it dropped pestle-like jaws and ate rapidly. The man, making no move to free himself because of sudden, unreasoning thrill of fear which coursed his spine, watched the tiny insect.

Of a sudden it faced right about, acted undecided for an instant, then walked quickly, spasmodically up again to rim of dish. There it poised, raised wings as if to brush something from its back, and fell to the table-cloth—dead.

The yellow fingers relaxed.

"Don't believe I'll sample that soup," commented Rast wryly.

A strange constriction had come into his throat. He subdued a shiver. That —— Chinaman! By effort of will, however, Rast managed to keep any sign of disturbance from his countenance.

"Pour it out—where Rabbit won't get it."

Choly Fun Yen, tureen and plate in hand, stopped in the doorway.

"Men who make poison allee-same for kill plinces," he enunciated with dignity, "not will allow dogs to suffer!"

And he disappeared, to return a moment later with substitute cup of chicken-parsley bouillon.

The man, somewhat shaken and thoughtful yet in grip of will, forced himself to eat a part of each dish set before him. For first time he had been forced to look into the intelligence of a man who had no fear of him—and Rast was man enough to admire courage and subtlety. The application entire, of Choly's symbolism, he would have to ponder. Somehow all grim triumph and elation had fled. He felt old, queer.

CHOLY himself was silent as he watched Rast, filling after-dinner pipe and stalking out upon the veranda. Then as the master, with Rabbit following sedately at heel, descended the steps and made off slowly toward Riedeman's pear orchard, Choly cleared the table and washed the dishes. Afterward he went out behind the house to the impassive image he had set up on the stump, squatted before it and propounded many sing-song queries which any less deity than the great Buddha might have found difficulty in answering.

Charity and goodness of heart toward those in dire need was a duty and pleasure to any man of worth. Yet a servant should be watchful always of his master's interest as the wise Confucius proclaimed. Also, Choly Fun Yen possessed the natural thrift of his race. Banks, and all the paraphernalia of loans and mortgages, he trusted only in slight degree. It was only after wrestling with reluctance, therefore, that he returned to his bed-chamber, there to pry up a cunningly fitted floor-board and draw from the dark hole below several tight-folded green packets, and a cloth bag which clinked.

IV

JEM RAST walked out and beyond Riedeman's orchard, plodding through the squdgy fringe of boot-high pitcher-plants and coarse grass bordering Fenetra cane-brake, and on over a slight rise into oak scrub. Head was bent forward, shoulders hunched from usual inflexible line, and the deep-cut furrows descending from beside nostrils to mouth corners were like knife-slashes in buff plaster.

Corrosive contempt directed by his brain against a queer surge of impulse—impulse he attempted to damn as weak-kneed and sentimental—somehow failed to convince. That Chinaman! Though he would not have admitted the fact under water-chamber torture, Rast was totally unable to regard Choly Fun Yen any longer as a mere cog in the domestic machinery. No man in the world could have shaken Jem Rast as had his self-effacing, curiously faithful servant.

Long years had passed since Choly previously had made Rast uncomfortable. The employer, able to exclude—from bitter years of fight which had gained him control over flittings of fancy just as other men fight for and control activities and loyalties of subordinates in a great corporation—from cognizance of what he did not wish to remember or consider, knew deep down that something greater than American gold kept Choly with him.

The salary Rast paid was ridiculously large; no Oriental, probably, doing Choly's work received more than half or two-thirds as much. In measure Jem Rast's overpayment was sop to his own unease; he told himself, before commanding the thought to be banished, that he had bought loyalty. And all along knowledge of that rare lie had been with him. He had not needed to ask

Choly concerning the other dishes on his dinner-table.

Rabbit, stalking at heel as long as dog patience and potency of original command lasted, finally ranged alongside—then coursed a short distance in the scrub, looking back interrogatively at his master. Rast made no sign. He had forgotten the dog.

Five minutes later Rabbit seemed to dismiss doubts. It was strange enough to come out here in a range abounding with exciting, delicious scents of game without having the master bring a gun, yet that omission scarcely bothered. Rabbit's business was to search; if a discovered covey was not wanted, then he could not be blamed.

He circled. After a time he located a covey, half-froze, and then—when there was no pull at his neck or bite of the sharp-toothed brads—plunged joyously ahead. The birds whirred in rise.

Jem Rast heard the motor-like sound. He saw the dog plunging ahead with jaws open, and smiled grimly. The two were paired well indeed. The dog was a flusher, a spoil-sport; he——

In country of illicit whisky, where shinny still or assemblage of mash-barrels occupies the far-away reaches of branch and cop, plainest foot-paths may be the least safe. Broad, seemingly well-trodden ways through bog and branch may divert the casual visitor from region of one danger—but bring him unsuspecting toward a greater.

Dozens of revenue officers of the old days have used these transverse paths, and never returned. Wandering deer, turkey or quail hunters, or new-day enforcers of an amendment hated by most backwoodsmen, have been glimpsed plunging into branch or brake—and never have appeared on other side.

In most cases even their bodies have not been recovered, for amid the shallow, sand-clay trickles of south-central Alabama are twelve-foot mires, pits which suck with the relentless mouth of ooze the consistency of sorghum. Also there are deliberate traps.

Jem Rast never had used more than two roads to his new section. One, the red-clay thoroughfare which skirted Riedeman's orchard to the south, allowed a Ford rough passage. The second, a faint foot-path through the woods and swamp, crossed the south branch of Marble Creek ten furlongs from Rast's bungalow. It was a short-cut.

The man, starting with no idea save to rid himself of house, servant and all save the promptings of reason, took neither. He wandered. Remorseless suggestion of something deeper within him than the fibers of his restless, scheming brain, directed his steps—and his purpose. Good Lord, if what Kepple had told was the truth, why not go over there and give that baby a chance, anyway? No one in Turpentine Bend ever would know.

Catastrophe came without warning. Intending to cross the creek, which at this point had shallowed to depth of tiny rivulet, Rast followed a trampled, meandering path through the thicket. As he stepped from hummock to hummock, approaching the stream-bed, he passed beneath the slanting reach of whitened cypress-trunk. A crooked, detached branch seemed to have caught the leaning trunk of dead tree, holding the latter upright.

Rast could not guess that the lower end of the forked branch was balanced just below the hummock upon which he had to step. He went forward. A creak, sudden movement of the heavy trunk, a scraping of thorn bushes—and then a sharp, poignant cry from the man, which was drowned in the heavy crash of the falling tree, told that the trap had been sprung.

A split-second too late Rast glimpsed the menace. He attempted to leap forward. The treacherous hummock gave. He sprawled face downward, legs twisted, as the crushing weight descended upon his hips and back.

Black, swirling agony of shattered limbs leaped before his eyes. He was caught, crushed, helpless. As he struggled to hold to shreds of reeling consciousness, a curiously detached notion came to him. His face was below the level of the stagnant water. Possibly he could not raise himself anyway, but why attempt to do so? Why not give up? One gulp of water, and then there would remain no need to suffer, to fight for life.

Through the space of seconds, as a horrible pain tore at legs and back, he toyed with the thought. All he had to do was inhale. Then sometime—perhaps not until after the short-necked buzzards had finished their grisly work with him—they would track him down with bloodhounds. No one would guess that Jem Rast had died a coward.

But no! With a wrench upward, a movement which actuated only his shoulders, arms and neck, he managed to raise himself the distance of a few inches. He gasped in a half-lungful of air, only to release it in a shuddering groan as he turned back to look. The movement caused exquisite agony. The sight of his predicament destroyed any remnant of hope. He had been smashed between the barkless trunk and the hummock below and was pinned down by a crushing bulk!

All sensation had departed from the region of knees and toes, and only the tearing pain of thighs and back reminded him that this much had not been paralyzed. Probably his back was broken, though he could not tell. At any rate he could not hope to extricate himself. The limit of his power lay in scraping up grass, leaves and muck, filling the puddle where his face had lain.

This accomplished, he gathered all remaining strength, yelled twice for help into the smothering pendants of Spanish moss above and about, then relaxed, closing his eyes. No one would hear him. No one. Numbness, blessed surcease from the pain, seemed to steal across his faculties.

RABBIT, floundering back to investigate, found features in the strange situation which he neither understood nor liked. What was the master doing lying there asleep? Rabbit's head cocked itself interrogatively. He splashed up another step or two, sniffing. There was a curious odor of hurt about the master now—the same variety of scent which sent Rabbit chasing furiously after a wounded bird. Only this was human, and Rabbit did not like it.

He whined tentatively, a curious, confidential little sound high in his throat, and came still closer. Something surely was wrong. The master never slept out here in the swamp.

Rabbit, tense with a daring he never had imagined, leaned forward. His tongue crept out. It touched moist tip to the master's cold face, then of a sudden swept further and licked the whole cheek.

Rast moaned, moving slightly. Rabbit fairly wriggled with joy. He drew back, voiced a throaty *wuff*, then dared a third time.

The man, waking to dismal consciousness, retched in nausea of pain. He wanted to be left alone.

"Rabbit!" he grimaced in weak command.

The dog became rigid, recognizing the tone which was a signal for him to perform one of his tricks.

"Go out and hunt 'em up! Go on, boy!" Rast managed a flirt of his left hand, indicating that Rabbit was to circle the woods after quail.

This was far from orthodox, and Rabbit was aware of the fact. Why didn't the master get up and come along? What good would there be in hunting when no one was there with a gun? Rabbit hesitated, looking back.

"Go on boy, hunt 'em up!" repeated the man wearily, and as the dog this time seemed to take reassurance, closed his eyes.

Pain was creeping higher toward neck and shoulders, however. He could not lapse into lethargy. Sickness that comes with nearness to fainting was in his every fiber, and no teeth-clamping or determination could drive it away.

An hour — two hours — dragged by. Shadows deepened in the thicket. Outside the sun still tinged tops of the pines, yet in the branch darkness was coming fast. Something cautious, bellying sluggishly in the ooze, passed close. Rast turned his head, and in spite of his tight grip upon himself a cry which was not far from terror sped his lips. The newcomer was a spotted swamp moccasin. The snake, sensing unaccustomed warmth seeping through to his retreat, had come toward the source of that warmth, doubtless intending a new nest.

With his left hand Rast scraped up a handful of slime and threw it at the snake. Then another and another. The moccasin, sluggish and half-blind, struck ineffectually once, then slithered off.

"O God!" whispered Jem Rast—then grinned in fierce derision of his weakness.

Time was seventeen years past since he had invoked that Name. In that one great emergency of his life there had been no Deity in his heaven ready to listen, and in the barren years which since had passed Jem Rast had got along somehow without giving tribute or fealty.

Splashing and a rustle of brush heralded Rabbit's return. He galloped back to the waiting man, something brown and feathery clutched in his mouth. He came straight to Rast, lowered his head, and offered the still feebly fluttering body of a captured quail!

"Caught one, by George!" ejaculated Rast. "Well, I'll be darned! Brought it to me because you figured I'd be hungry! Well Rabbit, you're not as dumb as they say you are. The time may come, tomorrow or next day, when I won't mind raw quail and swamp water!"

He broke off, reaching up to pat the dog's muzzle and to ward away the warm, caressing tongue. An idea had come. Rabbit had one trick which might be useful here!

Squirming sidewise, tearing off the buttons from his jacket in the attempt to free his right lapel, he reached inward. The brown manila envelope picked up by Choly had been put in that pocket. If only he could get it, and Rabbit understood. This was the only article with him which belonged to another person.

"Come here, boy!" he called imperatively. "Yes, right here. Smell that? Well, you took back a slipper to that fellow. Yes, and you took lots of other things—remember the sash, the handkerchief, and all that?"

Rabbit bounced forward. He stood sniffing at the grimy, soaked envelope. What his master was saying did not carry through completely, but Rabbit understood the main points of the game, and was trembling in anxiety. This piece of paper was to be taken away and given to some one—the person to whom it belonged.

"Take it, Rabbit!" commanded Rast, relinquishing the envelope as the pointer's teeth closed gently over it—then grabbing for the envelope quickly as a new idea crossed the mind of the pinioned man.

Rabbit did not *want* to surrender his prize, but did so when Rast commanded feverishly. Then the man hunted his available pockets, finding in one a stub of pencil. On the wet paper he wrote a few words, describing his situation tersely and giving the location of the path by which he had entered the branch.

"Take it now, boy!" he commanded again. "Take it back to Choly—to *him!*"

Rast, striving to put all remaining strength into the words, imagined that for the dog no one but the Celestial would be considered. The game had been played only with him—and beside, barring Rast's own touch, Choly, who had rescued it from the floor, had been last to finger the envelop.

Long, smooth-haired tail slapped back and forth. Rabbit's jaws closed again upon the legal-sized envelope. He whined in eagerness. This was a game he understood. When with a last admonition Rast released the envelope, Rabbit sped away, half-swimming at times, floundering, galloping over the higher portions and regaining the scrub outside where it was dry underfoot. He started at a fast rate back toward the bungalow on the hill.

Rabbit had not paused to reason it out. The rules of this game were well known to him, and if interpretation of those rules was not foursquare with the master's ideas the dog would be at complete loss. Rabbit interpreted his task as that of bringing back to the owner whatever article was given to him.

On this fat manila envelop were three scents—that of his master, the faint smell of Choly Fun Yen, and the ingrained pungency belonging to that strange human who had scratched his ears and treated him so decently. The envelope patently could *not* belong to the master. Choly was not the owner, surely, though the pointer's delicate olfactory sense detected the fact that the Chinaman had handled the missive. Very well, Rabbit would return the soaked envelope to the stranger, whom he expected to find of course, where he had last seen him—at his master's bungalow.

Had Jem Rast guessed the process of dog mentality he might not have cared to utilize even this one chance for release.

The door of the Rast bungalow was closed. The outside screen-door was locked. Rabbit tried to nose open the latter. Then he whined—a yelp being impossible—and scratched with forepaws at the screen.

No one answered. The house was empty. Some minutes Rabbit persisted. Then he went to the rear entrance. He scratched with similar lack of success. Night had fallen, and a perfect circle of moon shed liquid silver upon top of the hill. The stranger ought to be here! If he had gone away what could have been the master's meaning?

Twenty minutes later Rabbit solved the problem in typical dog fashion. He gave up trying to enter the room where he had seen the stranger. Instead, he cast about, circling the house. On the gravel-clay sidewalk which he had avoided previously he found the scent which corresponded to that which had soaked deep into the envelope. It was a human trail, one leading away from the

bungalow as the Rabbit knew by its freshening pungency, by no means unpleasant—though not as enthralling to him, by far, as the scent of the master.

Fifteen minutes later, alternating running with close, slow work with nose to the ground, Rabbit was on the red-clay road skirting Riedeman's sand-pear orchard and leading by a roundabout way toward the eighty-acre remnant of Bert Kepple's ancestral holding.

CHOLY FUN YEN, his reluctance overcome in selfless desire to nullify the brutality of his employer, sought and found the remodeled cabin. He did not discover Bert himself at first, for the planter, bearing a single-barrel shotgun and carrying only a handful of No. 2 buckshot cartridges—no ammunition for the small game to be found at this season in neighborhood of Marble Creek—had left ostensibly for a hunting trip in the woods. In reality Bert Kepple made straight for the bungalow on the hill. Determining, after a time, that Jem Rast was not at home, Bert ranged out through the woods, his eyes peering in search of game far more important than quail or wild turkey. In three miles, however, he caught no sight of his quarry. He returned glumly to his own cabin.

A surprize of such magnitude awaited Choly Fun Yen that at first sight of the trim figure in the lighted doorway he stopped stockstill, raising open palms in mute protest. Slanted eyes blinked incredulously, then closed. He repeated silently a Chinese invocation against spirits of once loved ones exhibiting any inclination to return. Then he looked again.

The figure still was there—the figure of a young woman, haggard as if with too great dissipation, treacherously beautiful, the woman whose defection and betrayal seventeen years before had caused undeserved disaster to enter the life of one whom the Chinaman loved.

Choly was sure, of course, that she did not stand there. By this time, anyway, she would have become old. This was a girl of twenty or thereabouts. It was she whom the master had called Katie—the woman of his life, who had chosen to ruin that life and career!

Carefully not looking, adjuring the apparition to disappear, Choly Fun Yen gravely squatted, raising his hands and bringing them to the ground before him, as his wrinkled, yellow forehead touched again and again the red clay.

The woman, looking toward him in puzzled fashion, clutched restrainingly at a tiny child, a girl in short dresses, blue scarf and yellow curls, who had attempted to edge past. The woman seemed to be trying to remember. One hand passed lightly across temples and tired eyes.

Then Choly Fun Yen raised on his haunches. The invocation was finished. All malignant spirits must have fled. And yet——

A cry burst from his lips, and his jaws sagged.

"Mis' *Kitty!*"

Black eyes were wide now, for Choly looked upon the greatest of all unrealities, a yellow-haired child which he had served and loved nearly two decades before, and who now stood there beside her spirit mother, unchanged!

The woman remembered then.

"*Choly!*" she cried, running toward him with hands outstretched, and the half-hysterical laugh which is near indeed to tears convulsing her throat. When all had appeared lost, when even the man for whom she was making this struggle and sacrifice lay on his bed mouthing strange words and fragments of a past which she had not shared, the grave, friendly servant whom she had known in childhood appeared as nothing less than saviour.

Without that queer invocation, that squatting and head-rubbing, she never could have recognized—yet for her edification Choly often had exhibited his half-believed rites and ceremonies.

Head on his shoulder she sobbed out her story, not questioning, caring nothing so long as for the time being she and her daughter knew the calm of a kindly, sympathetic presence. And Choly, understanding gradually that this was indeed the little girl and not her erring mother from the past, relaxed to quiet smile of beatific happiness—which became a trifle grim, though joyously so, only when the slant eyes turned back toward the dark road which led to the bungalow on the hill.

Rabbit cared nothing at all for this man at whose cabin door he scratched. Kepple was to be given the envelope. After that the pointer could return. Because of laughter and present-denying happiness

within—which took little stock of the silent invalid, or the gloomy brother lurking in a corner beyond the bed—the scratching went unheard for some minutes.

Finally Choly Fun Yen answered, throwing the door wide on its hinges.

"Labbit!" he exclaimed. "What you got there?"

But the dog, intending to waste no time on Choly, had brushed past and gone to the knee of Bert Kepple, proffering the envelope. The man frowned. His eyes fell upon the missive, however, and something stirred amid the dull anger seething in his brain.

He reached down, took the envelope—and then a short, fierce exclamation akin to an oath burst from him as he leapt to his feet, grabbing the single-barrel shotgun and a smoking lantern from its hook. He had read the scrawled pencil message. Man and dog burst from the doorway together, but the race which ensued in the darkness Rabbit won by a large margin.

"AND so I won't ask help from you, Kepple. You've threatened to kill me, and this will save you the trouble. Both my legs are broken, one wrist is splintered, and possibly there are other injuries. A few hours will finish it. Be on your way. All you have to do is keep your mouth shut!"

"It's God's justice!" cried the young man huskily, holding the lantern on level with a countenance on which mercy, desire for vengeance, and innate decency of one reborn to manhood, struggled. His other fist gripped about the shotgun.

"Maybe you're right, Kepple," admitted Rast, stifling a gasp of pain under a cloak of indifference. "Maybe I've had this coming. Maybe I had—the rest—coming——"

He had fainted.

In spite of callousness for which he had striven, Bert Kepple leaped forward. Quick examination showed him that his enemy indeed was in extremity; that death, save for immediate help, could not be far away. And then queer, throaty cry which was near to an apology for weakness came from the planter. He knelt down, drawing a knife from his belt and digging savagely at the bed of clay and ooze surrounding the treacherous hummock.

Ten minutes later he had excavated a narrow pit beside Rast's body. Then, taking the long-barreled gun as he might have used a crow-bar, Kepple inserted this beneath the heavy log, using all the leverage strength that rusted steel would allow him to exert. As he strained at the task Rabbit ran about, splashing from spot to spot and whining unnoticed his desire to be of assistance.

Fortunately the fact that the heavy end of the cypress log lay partially across two hummocks allowed Kepple some play of lever—and also gave him ultimate success. The great bole tilted up, then rolled ponderously away, leaving beneath former site a crumpled, pitiful wreck of flesh and bone.

Bert Kepple was shocked from last animosity by what his fingers encountered. From that instant he thought no longer of hatred unfulfilled, but gathered up his broken enemy tenderly in strong arms and bore him unconscious back toward the little cabin.

There Choly Fun Yen, after one shocked, understanding glance, commended the new patient to the care of Bert and his sister-in-law and hastened out, seeking the nearest telephone—and the most available doctor at the other end of it.

During the night that followed, limited accommodations and the necessity for quick action kept all of them, save the invalid Ralph Kepple, scurrying about the place obeying commands of the surgeon. Little Kitty was put to bed hastily, but refused to stay there. During the single time for many hours Jem Rast was to regain consciousness she stood in white nightgown by her mother's side.

Jem Rast, burning now with a fever which turned even Choly and the surgeon into strange apparitions, stared at the woman and her daughter fixedly for minutes. Then his eyes rolled in their sockets.

"In hell, Katie," he muttered. "Yes, you'd make it hell—but what's she doing here?"

The query rose almost to dry scream, as Jem Rast threw out one hand toward the yellow-haired baby. Then he subsided in unconsciousness again.

Days passed, however—days which dragged into weeks, then merged at accelerating pace into months—when Jem Rast learned the answer to his question. The tall, sorrow-sweetened, affectionate woman who divided shifts with the two special nurses brought down from the city,

was no malignant wraith as he had imagined, come for his torment. She was the daughter he had seen last as a yellow-haired lassie only a year or two older than this little child belonging to Ralph Kepple—Jem Rast's own granddaughter.

She, with the help of Choly Fun Yen who now hummed happily to himself as he *flip-flapped* his slippered way about the bungalow kitchen, took charge of the larger establishment to which all of them had come as soon as it was safe to move Rast in the ambulance.

As he lay there, facing a vista of weeks during which he would be dependent entirely upon the ministrations of these whom he had thought to wrong—and facing also the likelihood of ensuing years spent with crutches or cane—Jem Rast nevertheless found quiet resolve and greater measure of happiness. Long hours, while the others were out of the room, Rast lay with left hand touching the head of Rabbit; the dog, his golden eyes glowing in a loyalty that grew instead of diminishing, was content to couch his head upon edge of the covers, granted nearness and comradeship with the man he loved.

Rast made Choly Fun Yen his executive pending the time the bones knitted. The Chinaman saw to it that a certain unrecorded deed was destroyed; that Ralph Kepple was taken to the infirmary at Mobile, there to be given into the charge of a great surgeon-neurologist who held out some hope of recovery through an intricate operation; and that a certain firm of New York investigators was given the task of searching out the whereabouts of a woman who once had been Rast's wife, and concerning whom he did not wish to ask his daughter.

Choly was to provide the only information concerning this woman, and did that. Rast learned that after the divorce she had married the other man. Disaster came swiftly, in spite of the great fortune he had flung at her with the broken remnants of his love. The panic of 1907 swept away the money. Her new husband shot himself in a moment of intoxicated rebellion against fate hurried by his own folly. She was said to have lived apart from her daughter, and to have made a meager living since by teaching the piano.

The Chinaman, after a long session out before the pine-stump in which many sticks of punk smoldered to white ash, exceeded his instructions. Through various representations he managed one day to have Rast alone in the bungalow. Then Choly went to the back door, waving a signal. A tall woman, one whose face had gone whiter than her hair, showing almost spectral above plain black dress, and who clasped close to her lips a crumpled ball of lace which now and then was dabbed agitatedly at her eyes, came slowly forward.

"He—he's—" she began in almost inaudible question.

"Asleep. You go in!" bade Choly Fun Yen succinctly, bowing her to the door of chamber.

Then he hastened back to ask still another dispensation of his just and merciful Buddha.

Bert Kepple, back from Mobile with his brother's wife—the two of them in for only a short time in order to tell the splendid news of Ralph's convalescence—found the white-haired woman still beside the bed, kneeling. Jem Rast's one serviceable arm was about her shoulders and he was smiling upward toward a picture which always had remained undusted.

"I don't want to be disturbed, folks—it—it's kind of new yet," he greeted those who stopped astounded in the doorway. "Katie's come back!

"But then, Kepple, there's one thing I want to ask you about that won't keep. It's concerning that section across the creek which you and I own. I'm planning to make a big thing out of that, but I'm not going to be able to do much of the managing. Do you suppose you'd like to take charge—with Ralph, when he's able?"

Bert Kepple made a curious, throaty sound. For the others he had been happy in the knowledge that now they would not want. He grinned, but the expression was wabbly.

"Oh, don't say anything, boy!" went on Rast, seeing the other's difficulty with speech. "I know you can do it. You're just the man to handle everything. There's just one regret I have. When once this thing is well launched, and we're trying to dig out a living for this whole family of ours, you're not going to have much time for training dogs—something you're mighty good at, too."

"But I'll train Rabbit!" interrupted Kepple eagerly, reaching down to pat the

dog's head. "I bet it don't take a week, even. The season is mighty near over, but I'll get right after it."

Jem Rast raised left hand in peremptory gesture.

"No, you don't!" he contradicted. "Rabbit and I maybe are useless old timber for what we were meant to do originally, but what of it? A man can try to be a man even if he doesn't sit on the roof of Wall Street. Likewise, a dog can be a mighty fine dog even if he doesn't ever point quail. Rabbit's a pal of mine, folks, and from now on I tell you he can flush all the birds he finds! Somehow it'll make me feel a whole lot better if *one* of my real friends falls a little short of perfection! The rest of you——"

And he winked, through moisture which had gathered strangely, to a grinning yellow man who had appeared back of them in the chamber doorway.

AN ELUSIVE RIVER

by C. B. Watson

IT IS a peculiar geographical fact that as late as 1852 one of the largest rivers in the United States, the Red River of Louisiana, remained unexplored, although the passes of the distant Rocky Mountains and of the more distant Sierra Nevada had been conquered and the various far western streams had been visited for many years by white men.

Captain Randolph B. Marcy is authority for the assertion that no white man ever ascended the Red river to its source up to 1852 when he was ordered to undertake the work. More than a quarter of a century before him white men had become acquainted with the Far West because of the demand for beaver. The immigrant rush to Oregon and the gold-rush to California had greatly enlarged the east's knowledge of very remote regions. But this country traversed by a river emptying into the Mississippi still remained *terra incognita.*

The French at a very early day had attempted to penetrate to the upper basin of the Red, but they went no farther than the country of the Natchitoches and Caddoes (vicinity of Natchitoches, La.). Three years after the Louisiana Purchase was consummated the United States sent a small exploring party from St. Catherine's landing near Natchez, Mississippi, to examine the Red river to its source. They entered the Red in May, 1806, intending to travel by boat to the Pawnee country. From the Pawnees they were to buy horses and pack supplies to "the top of the mountains" (quoting from their orders).

The distance of this leg of travel was estimated to be three hundred miles. It is obvious that at that time the Red was supposed to head in a very mountainous country. The explorers were turned back by Spanish troops before reaching the Pawnees.

In 1806 Lieutenant Pike led an expedition up the Arkansas, with orders to strike across country to the head of the Red. Suffering much from cold and lack of provisions, the Pike party finally reached a stream running to the east. This was supposed to be the Red, but was the Rio Grande. The governor of New Mexico halted the work and sent the men home by the way of Chihuahua and San Antonio. And that was that.

General Wilkinson told young Pike:

"The principal object of your expedition up the Arkansas was to discover the true position of the sources of the Red river. This was not accomplished."

Colonel Long next took a whack at the Red. On returning from between the Missouri and the head of the Arkansas he remembered the head of the Red remained to be discovered and decided to take it in on his way home. He followed a creek having a westerly course, which he believed emptied into the Red. He followed this two hundred miles and then was told by "the nation of Kaskias," or "Bad Hearts," that sure enough he was on the Red. Glad to have the affair over with he proceeded several hundred more miles and discovered he was on the Canadian of the Arkansas.

And as the Red river had not been the pathway of mighty migrations as was the Arkansas, or filled with beaver to tempt the early trapper, as were the tributaries of the Missouri, or the pathway for a great volume of commerce, as was the Missouri during the trapping, trading, and gold-hunting days, its sources long remained unknown.

GIVENS' RETURN

by Howard F. Gaiser

I THINK that if anybody wanted to get funny and would address a letter to the "Commanding Officer, No-where in particular," said letter would eventually arrive at Camp Overton, Mindanao, P. I. We were holding down that post, by the grace of God and good marksmanship and although our time in that particular part of the world was getting short and we should of been happy with the prospect of an early return home we were not happy. Time was dragging, and we had been there so long that we were all fed up on the islands.

Late one evening I was returning from the guard-house from my tour of guard and had just entered our quarters when I overheard the tail end of a remark that set me to thinking. This is what I heard—

"—and he knows the facts, so ask him about it."

I wondered what it was that I knew the facts about, but I didn't inquire because I wanted to clean my guard equipment and get some rest, and that is what I proceeded to do.

It wasn't very long before I noticed a general movement in my direction and I had about decided to refuse all requests when one of the men stepped over to me and handed me a small faded picture. I recognized it at once and asked him where he got it. He said that Corporal Franklin had showed it to them and that Franklin had told them that I knew the original of it at one time and that there was a story attached, and would I tell them about it.

The picture was of an American soldier standing by the side of a Moro girl. Yes, I knew the story, every detail of it, why shouldn't I? His was the only case that I knew of where a deserter from the ranks of the United States Army was returned a hero.

I ALWAYS had a hankering for the letter C, so at the time that I am speaking of I was soldiering in C troop of the —— Cavalry, and was stationed at a camp up the trail, on this very island. There was a sort of a renegade Dato* named Muguana camping back in the hills that was giving us quite a bit of trouble just then, but the authorities at Manila were trying to tame these *gugus* by treating them nice, but that didn't work out just right, as you will see later.

This Muguana was the goat for the Datos in this district; that is they furnished him with men and arms and got him to do the dirty work while they pretended to be friends of the government. Well, this Muguana would take his gang out every once in a while and raise —— and put a chunk under it and then beat it back to his

*Chief.

hills and all that we could do was cuss everybody concerned.

About this time a trumpeter, named Givens, that belonged to our troop fell in love with a Moro girl that lived a few miles from Camp Kiethly, over beyond Sacred Mountain. I want to say right here that I had seen this girl and she was the prettiest little brown girl that ever stuck a tooth in betelnut, and I suppose that she was a diversion from camp life, so anyway, he went over the hills with her and we had almost forgotten him when he returned in a rather spectacular way.

Muguana had been active again and had cut up a patrol on the Overton-Kiethly trail up around Pantar, but this time he had overstepped himself, and Manila had sent word to get him. We sure were ready and anxious to do that very thing.

He had a hole up in the hills some place, and no one knew just where it was, that is, no one that would tell, so it was up to us to find him. All we knew was that he had about two hundred followers and about forty times that many sympathizers, so poking around in the hills looking for him was going to be hot and dangerous work. I had dodged slugs from bamboo cannon, and I knew that there was several of said cannon in those hills, but—we all wanted to go.

Well, Major Andrews and Lieut. Darks, the adjutant, got their heads together and decided that they would send out some scouts to locate the hole-in-the-wall, before sending out the main body. So volunteers were called for, and out of the three hundred and twenty men in our camp, three hundred and twenty stepped out to go.

Finally Sergt. Thomas of C troop and Corporal Nuber of A troop were detailed to nose out Muguana. Now that was a darn poor choice in the estimation of three hundred eighteen men that were compelled to cool their heels in camp while those two birds were out in the hills having all of the fun. But the major and lieut. sure knew their business according to the way things turned out.

Thomas was one of the best soldiers that I ever had the good fortune to know, and this old Army lost a good man when he was knocked off over at Mt. Badaho, back in 1907. Nuber was a good man too, and we all felt that they would produce results. Well, the next night they slipped out of camp, and we settled down to wait as patiently as we could.

YOU know how these rains start over here; one minute it is so dry and hot your skin will crack and the next you are looking for an Ark. Thomas and Nuber were about thirty miles back in the hills and were just giving a nipa* shack the once-over when one of them rains blows up and helps them decide to use said shack. It was setting in a small clearing and as it was the only shelter handy it didn't take much urging to start them toward it. There was a small creek about fifty yards away so Thomas heads for it to fill the canteens while Nuber explores their shelter.

The place looked dead enough, so Nuber, who was a devil-may-care sort of a fellow, walked right in the open door, the door wasn't made for a he-man anyway so he kinda fills her up as he goes in and, added to the darkness outside, it made the inside of the room pretty dark. Anyway Nuber didn't see what was inside until he was trying to force open a window at the opposite side of the room and when he did see things he wanted to get out, *pronto*.

The shack wasn't empty at all—two of the ugliest Moros in the Moro Province were standing over close to the door and they each had a bolo as long as your arm. Right away Nuber reaches for his six-gun, but he finds his holster empty. Well, it was too late to lose any time wondering where he had lost it—he was busy thinking just how bad he was going to look in another minute.

If that had of been me I would of refused to play, but Nuber didn't know how to renege, so he just backs away as far as the wall would let him and then edges along until his hand comes in contact with a window-prop which he grabs hold of. His feelings must of been like a drowning man's when they reach for the straw, but a club in his hand feels better than nothing. Nuber told me later that the man that said that a dying man thinks of everything must of lied because he never thought of Thomas over at the creek.

His two dusky friends across the room think that it is about time to start the works, so one of them edges over toward Nuber and begins to swing his bolo. Nuber

*Grass.

remembered the old army slogan to 'do something; right or wrong it is better than nothing,' so he does something. He leaps at the nearest native and then ducks to the floor all in one movement and say, he didn't duck for nothing for the bolo in the hands of that nearest Moro made the air scream right where Nuber's head was just a second before and the force of that blow carried the native half-way around, before he could stop it and regain his balance.

That was just what Nuber was praying for, so he leaps up and brings that club down with all of his strength right on top of that Moro's head. If that club had of been a saber it would of traveled clear down to the chin, but, being only a club and not a very good one at that, all it did was just spoil a good head. No; that wasn't *all*, it spoiled the club too, broke square off in Nuber's hand. The second Moro had started forward just as his pal swung at Nuber, and if he had of kept on coming there would not of been any little Nubers running around Baltimore today, but he stopped and his jaw dropped when he seen what had happened to his pal.

That gave Nuber time to grab the bolo from the dead man's hand and leap back, but not any too soon because that fellow was on his guard in a split-second and full of fight. He didn't know anything about fencing, but in his line of fighting he didn't need to know much. Did you ever see a Moro use a bolo? Well their bodies look like the hub of a wheel and the spokes is bolo and about the only thing that will penetrate that wheel is a bullet.

Nuber backed across the room defending himself the best that he could, bringing into play all of the skill that he had learned at fencing drill and finally he managed to nick the native's arm-pit, and that was a lucky nick because it broke up that awful wheel of flying steel and caused the native to get reckless and rush Nuber. The air was full of flying sparks from their blades and they were both breathing hard when Nuber slipped and fell.

The darkness that got Nuber into this mess was responsible for his getting out, for when he fell the native lost him for a second and that second was a life-saver for Nuber. As he raised up he thrust the point of his bolo upward and caught the Moro just under the chin and almost severed his head from his body.

The Moro had just found Nuber lying at his feet, as Nuber started to raise up, and was starting a downward swing, both hands gripping the bolo hilt, when Nuber's thrust got home. About half-way down the native's muscles relaxed, and the bolo slipped out of his hands and went sailing right through the grass wall and disappeared outside.

Nuber was standing on his two trembling legs when Sergt. Thomas came through the door carrying the same bolo and asked Nuber—

"What the —— do you mean by throwing this thing at me?"

Nuber was kinda wabbly for a couple of hours after this and the rain was coming down in gobs, so they decided to camp right where they were. So they heaved the dead *hombres* out and rolled them under the shack and settled down for the night.

Long about midnight the moon came out; the rain had stopped, so about four o'clock Thomas thinks that they had better be moving before somebody comes along and sees them or the dead men under the house. Anyway, staying in there wasn't finding Muguana, so they ease out and head for the jungles again. Nuber can't figure out just where he had lost his gun and from now on he was going to have to travel under a handicap. He took the bolo that had come in so handy the evening before but—well I don't know but what a good bolo is as good if not better than a gun in that country, but I know that a gun feels better to a white man.

Well, they drift along kinda easy until daylight and had covered about four miles when Thomas says that they are getting close to where he thinks that they may strike something interesting, and Nuber says that some eats wouldn't go bad, so they ease over into a bamboo thicket and proceed to get on the outside of some hard-tack and canned willie.

It happened that they had stopped in among some water bamboo, and Nuber wants a drink, so he takes his bolo and began to cut off some of the joints to fill his canteen. You know the bamboo that I mean, each joint is filled about half-full of water.

Well right where they were the stems were small and seeing some larger joints farther along he wanders over toward them, and then seeing some that were still larger a

little way ahead he went over there, and finally when his canteen is almost full and is ready to go back to Thomas he gets a bump on his head, and his lights go out.

He wakens up some time later and finds that he is right where he had started for, in Muguana's camp. There were natives all around him, and he was tied up, so that he couldn't move and right in front of him is Muguana himself.

NUBER has a bump on the back of his head that feels about the size of a foot-ball, and it hurts accordingly.

When Muguana sees that Nuber has returned to the land of *nipa* houses and big snakes, he speaks in that groan and grunt language of theirs and a couple of his men steps out and jerks Nuber to his feet. Then everybody grins because he can't stay standing. His head don't seem like it belongs to him and his feet are tied so tight that he can't maintain his balance, so he just topples over on his face and stays there. At another groan and grunt from Muguana the deer thongs are removed from his feet and he is rolled over.

He is coming around pretty fast and the old world that had been going around and around had slowed down and finally came to a stop. When he gets a chance to look around he finds that he is in a small valley, well, not exactly a valley; it is more like a bowl, all around him are hills too steep for a man to climb and they range from about one to two thousand feet high. At one side there is a small creek that came tumbling down in a series of falls, crossed the lower level and disappears right at the edge of the hills at the other side. The way that he felt and the place that he was in caused him to think that he had been dropped from a balloon.

After he looked around a bit Muguana started to get rid of some more of those grunts and another *hombre* starts to translate in bum English. The first question that they ask him relieves his mind considerable. They want to know if he is by himself. Nuber never bats an eye when he finds out that they didn't get Thomas, but he sure is relieved because he now figured that he has a fifty-fifty chance of being rescued if they let him live long enough.

They want to know where his gun is, where he came from, what he was doing up there—so he strings them along until they ask that last question, and a plan to live a little while pops right into his head. The success of said plan depends on whether they had seen Thomas or the two fellows that he had had his rumpus with back at the old shack. It was a long shot, but he was shooting at extreme range so he never hesitates.

He tells them that he is tired of the way that he was treated in the Army, the bum chow that is handed him and the hard work and above all he hated the way that the Americans treated the Moros. He said that he always was a friend of the Moros and that he had finally deserted and had come to them. He had an awful time convincing Muguana that he really wanted to stay in the hills and take a crack at the Americans once in a while, but this was a matter of life and death with him so he puts up a good argument and finally Muguana says that they will keep him a while, at least until they could find out more about him.

So they gave him something to eat and tied him to a tree that was handy; they wouldn't untie his hands, but they did loosen them a bit so that he wasn't uncomfortable and then the interpreter proceeded to get his life's history.

During the afternoon the interpreter said that they had had some trouble about a month before with another American and that Muguana was a little doubtful about him, meaning Nuber. Well Nuber finally found out that the other American was Givens, the man that I started to tell this story about, and that Muguana had taken Givens' Moro girl away from him and had put her in his own household, and that Givens had put up quite a battle. But they were too many for him, and he had been driven away, and that was the last that they had heard of him.

Things went along until after dark when Nuber was given another meal; he always got sore at us when we told him afterwards that they were feeding him on roast dog and grasshopper gullion, but that is what it was, nevertheless. They set a watch over him about nine bells, and everybody turned in. There was quite a few shacks in this place and one that was larger than the rest was used by Muguana and the interpreter, and Nuber was roped out close to it—which was also about the center of the camp.

The sentry kept the fire going because it was cold up there after dark and Nuber might of enjoyed himself if he had not been a prisoner.

He was wondering what had become of Thomas, but he felt pretty sure that he had beat it back to camp for help after he had found out about the capture, a fact that would be very plain if he would just follow his tracks for a little way and would find where he had been knocked out. Still, troops might hunt for a month and never find the place where he was now. He was getting drowsy and had just about decided that he would try to get some sleep when his head came up with a snap. Something had happened to him, and he didn't know what it was.

He glanced at the sentry who was nodding on the opposite side of the fire, he looked at the fire itself and at the shack of Muguana, but could not see or hear anything unusual. He had about decided that he was suffering from a case of nerves when it happened again. It was a flash of fire sweeping across his eyes and it came from about fifty yards out in the darkness, but just for an instant did it appear, and it looked like the reflection of the camp-fire from some night-prowling animal's eye.

A second later it appeared again and this time it held a little longer, and he was just on the point of calling the sentry's attention to it when it began to appear and disappear, appear and disappear and he almost yelled out when he realized what it was. Heliograph! Some person out there was trying to signal to him and who could it be but Thomas! Good old Thomas, trying to talk to him by casting the reflection of the camp fire into his eyes.

He began to read the slow flashes that came from out of the darkness and put them together:

N—U—B—E—R. N—U—B—E—R.

Glancing again at the sentry to make sure that he wouldn't give the thing away he nodded his head and the flashes stopped. Then they began again. Well Thomas told Nuber that he was going to slip in and they would try a getaway.

At this Nuber shook his head because he thought it was too early to take such a chance and he would rather that Thomas would go back to camp and bring the troops, but he couldn't tell Thomas this; he had no way of telling him—but wait—why not, they had studied all kinds of signaling and although he had no flag, and his hands were tied even if he did have a flag, but he could use his head and he could make the code in wig-wag easy enough by turning his head to the right and left for the letters and nodding for the end of each letter. Get the idea—simple wasn't it?

Well he jerked and nodded his messages to Thomas, and Thomas, by using the inside of his watch case blinked his answers back. After talking a while they decided that they would wait a while and maybe the sentry would go to sleep or something else would turn up to help them, because Thomas wouldn't agree to the idea that he go back for the troops.

Some time past midnight Thomas was just stretching himself and was getting ready to slip into Nuber when all —— broke loose.

In the stillness of the night it sounded like a salvo from half of the cannon in the world, and fire leaped almost across the little valley, and rocks and trees came tearing down the hillside with a mighty roar. The air was filled with flying débris, and rocks and limbs of trees fell all around Thomas and Nuber, but luckily they were not hit. The noise receded and died out almost as soon as it had started; then silence—silence so complete that it hurt the ears.

Boy, I don't blame those Gugus for wanting to get out in the open and away from that place; they came running from all directions and none of them had any idea where they were going.

Remember that I said that the little creek ducked into the wall over at one side? Well from just about that place now came the sweetest music that Thomas or Nuber ever heard, the silvery notes of a cavalry trumpet sounding the charge, and say, talk about a cattle stampede, it would of made a cow turn green with envy if it could of seen the stampede that trumpet caused. We afterwards found out that there was a little ravine that the natives used to get into this place and they all thought of it at once and all tried to be the first one there. They even cut down their best friends to get out of there.

It took Thomas a few seconds to get over his scare and shock and when he did get to

moving the grass did not grow under his feet, but as far as Nuber was concerned Thomas was entirely too late to help him. Muguana was headed for the open air himself, but as he passed Nuber he thought that he would leave his trade-mark. So he paused to make a good job of it and was just starting a swing with his bolo, and Nuber had visions of a nice long journey with wings and a harp waiting at the end of said journey, when Muguana grunted, doubled over and completed his fall with a somersault, then lay still. Nuber opened his eyes to see how the new land looked and was surprized to see a knife sticking clear through Muguana's neck.

By this time Thomas had arrived and cut the thongs that bound him to the tree and they were getting ready to join the troops when Givens the deserter came staggering into the firelight and gasped out that if they wanted to get away now was their chance. Of course they objected to leaving now that they heard the troops coming, but Givens said that there were no troops coming, that it was him who had sounded the trumpet and he had to fairly push them to get them started.

They didn't believe him, but they were afraid to take the chance of staying there in case he was right, so they hot-footed it after him and he leads them to where that creek dives under the cliffs. When he jumps into the water they follow. Well it seems like this creek has washed a tunnel through the hills and this came out about a half-mile on the other side. When they arrive out in the open air this Givens sets down rather sudden and asks for a drink. A rock from the blast had caught him in the chest and he was passing out fast.

But he lived long enough to tell them that he had caused the explosion with some dynamite that he had stolen from some Government work and had planted it under some rocks and trees up there overlooking the camp and was waiting for a good opportunity to set it off and get Muguana. Then he saw Nuber brought in a prisoner and he had decided to try to rescue him, not knowing that Thomas was there. He had taken his trumpet with him when he had deserted, and it was through the use of it that the rescue was made possible. That rock had almost wrecked his plans, but his hatred for Muguana and his determination to kill him had carried him through, for it was Givens that had thrown the knife that did kill the renegade Dato.

The death of Givens left them in a sort of a quandary. They were sure that the Moros would be hot after them in a short while and just the two of them could not hope to get the body back through the jungles the thirty miles to camp. They did not have time to bury the body, so Sergt. Thomas sneaks back into the creek-tunnel from where he returned in a short while and told Nuber that there was a rock just inside that raised well above the water line and that it was large enough to hold the body. So they carry Givens inside and leave him there on the rock.

By traveling all day and well into the night they finally arrive in camp and spread the news.

Well, having been cheated out of the job of cleaning out Muguana and his nest, all of our fellows begin to yell loud and long for to be in the party that was to return for the body of Givens.

Major Andrews decided that they could all go, so he ordered out all of the available men and late that afternoon they head for the hills with Thomas and Nuber acting as guides.

Never did a conquering hero march with a more enthused body of warriors or receive more whole-hearted respect from his warriors than Givens, the one-time deserter, did from the men of the ——th Cavalry as they escorted his dead body back to camp.

If you care to look you may find, tucked away in the old files in Headquarters of the ——th Cavalry, the service-record of one Givens, with a heavy red line drawn through the word "deserter" and the following added—

Killed in the line of duty.

FRETFUL MUNCHER*

By Raymond S. Spears

Author of "Lonesome," "The Shellers," etc.

HOWDY, stranger. Don't mind that hog. His intentions is mighty mean, but he's harmless. When you see a hog with his lips turning up, and a tail without much curl to it, he's no 'count. Course, some hogs is bad. Some is mean, too. We've hogs, around these parts, that you needn't to place no dependence in, not a bit. Some make a man laugh, some make him mad—some don't specially care a hog-grunt which they do, so long's they're doing.

Lots of people think hogs is all alike. They ain't. They show jes' as many dispositions as mules, and some have two-three dispositions, besides their reg'lar ones. People lose lots of the fine p'ints of hogs by judging 'em according to their roast pork, er sausage. I can judge a hog, thataway, too, same's anybody.

Take a ear-labeled hog, that's shifted for himself, living on beech and acorn mast, and probably his share of snakes an' rootings, and he has a flavor of his own which no hog-pen pork ever did get to have. I don't like cane-rooters so well as I do razorbacks, myself. Take cane-rooters, and they's swamp land bred, but hill hog is dry and tastier. That's just sort of notional, but at same time tain't all so.

I wish you could have known that razorback which used to be up here on the mountang, which everybody knowed, like he was a favorite dog, er somebody's mule. We actually had a name for that hog. Make a man laugh to think of having a name for a hog, wouldn't it? Regular name, too; called him Fretful Muncher. Don't know who first give him the whole name, but some called him Muncher account of his making such a noise when he was eating satisfactory, and some called him Fretful, account of him being such an uneasy hog. So when they identified that hog, they called him both names, like a human, Fretful Muncher.

No hog ever ate more like he enjoyed eatting than this 'n, no indeed. I heard that hog eatin' roastin' ears one night down by Joe-Pete Creft's place, and he was a fair whoop away, across the Big Hollow. My land! He sure sounded destructive on that corn, an' he was. Joe-Pete hadn't no patience with that hog, naturally, but, you see, Flet Fillune claimed Fretful as owner, an' nobody cared to cross Flet by botherin' his best hog.

Flet owned lots of hogs, an' ear-tagged him; so everybody knowed this Fretful was his'n. Course, that made trouble, when Fretful took to rambling clear from Wasted Gap to Fallsink branch. That's nine miles, one way, an' both sides the ridge, which was two miles. This was right through this country, an' while nobody admired that hog, speaking of liking him, they was real personal, keeping Flet Fillune good-natured. Makes a lot of difference how hogs lives, depending on who owns 'em.

Flet took particular pains keeping Fretful in people's minds, so they wouldn't make no mistake about him. He didn't

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** This is an Off-the-Trail Story. See first contents page.*

want his hog made nervous an' the meat spoiled, not by any body if he could help it. You take real fine eateners, an' they know if a hog has led a mean life, bein' sweat by dog chasin' an' bothered by interruptin' his meals, when they eat the meat. Flet just laid off to have one hog of his'n that'd be cool an' the meat juicy. So he favored this hog of his'n, right smart. At same time, he was s'prized and grateful, the way people give his hog a name, a name like a white human's with two parts, Fretful an' Muncher.

Well, sir, Flet planned he'd grow that hog about two years, an' then eat him. Lots kills hogs the first Autumn, but young hog-meat thataway don't have the flavor, nor the chaw to it, that two-year-old hogs has. Fretful took to rambling 'fore he was really out'n bein' a pig. Most funny pig eveh any one did see. He sure was! Why, when he was running with his mammy, he was so uneasy, she feared he'd starve, an' fair coaxed him to eat.

Then he took to running far and wide, an' he found sows with pigs was pretty much alike, and about all the sows on the mountang mothered him, they did! Why, when that pig was jest a squealer, he'd wander off two miles, an' bein' hongry, he'd suckle around in any pig-litter he happened to be friendly with. Sometimes, them fancy breeds of hogs would object. Take a big black hog, now, and fine looking, an' proud, an' what'd she want of any long-legged, big-headed mountang razor-back pig coming along of her stylish litter? Well, Fretful, he sure didn't draw no social distinctions, no indeed! All places to eat was alike to him, yehuh!

Yassuh. He'd come back to his own mammy, time to git his share, but he'd range wide, an' visit like a scouter, hiding out, an' bold. He'd eat inside an outside hog-tight fences, too. He'd climb a fence or root under hit. He had a haid that was twicet as big as any pigs of his weight. That give him a big advantage, an' as his laigs was long he could run like a rabbit. Why, seein' that pig wanderin' around, like razor-backs does an' ought to, even hill-billies would look twicet at him, he being marked an' the razor-backedest hog in the razor-back country. I 'low that's why Flet kind of set unusual store by that hog, he being more hill-billy an' even the run of hill-billies.

Now that hog run his own gait free an' easy, for eighteen months. Then come hog-killin' time, an' lots hoped Flet Fillune'd be reasonable an' kill that hog. He was a regular fur-hide, by this time. He had curly hair, an' by late November he had fuzz under the guard-hairs, like a possum, er mink. He was a genuine Woolly Hog with soft an' silky bristles. He was shiny an' sleek, an' his head had gone on growin', an' his body neveh had caught up with his head, the way reg'lar razor-backs does, only more so.

He knowed all the sweet corn, white corn, an' such, in all the cornfields along. No fence'd keep him in or out. Naturally, some was indignant, an' they sort of let that hog git caught inside some right tight fences, hopin' he'd come under the stray animal clauses, er hang hisse'f in the wires, the way some hogs does; but not this hog, no indeed!

He ate the bestest corn they was, an' when gubers come ripe, he'd root around, eating raw peanuts, an' right down the row, probably fifty, maybe a hundred yards 'fore he'd satisfy his appetite. Anybody else's hog'd be'n dogged an' had his ears all chewed up, an' tail bit off, but not Fretful Muncher, no indeedy!

Why, say, yo' ain't no idea the difference between razor-back hogs that's jes' plain or'nary an' them that's uncommon an' personal. Theh was "Si-Hank" Loukes in the Two-Spring Gap neighborhood. Si-Hank was tall an' independent, an' peaceable, too. He had two dogs. They was good red-bone dogs with Airedale an' terrier predominating. Them dogs was his favorites, 'n' hunted in a pair possum or coon nights, an' daytimes they jes' raved around an' sort of protected the crops from visitors. You know that kind of dog. It always watches chickens and cattle, and acts suspicious if anybody comes along. They was mighty suspicious toward everybody but Si-Hank.

Well, sir, they found Fretful down by the branch in some table-corn that Si-Hank was bragging about, havin' raised seeds for hit. Fretful approved Si-Hank's taste and jedgment, an' the two dogs interrupted his display of appetite and approval.

My land! Somehow, those dogs neveh had met Flet's hog, an' now they come at him, swinging wide an' separate, one to engage his attention, an' one to engage his

tail. Sho! Most hogs is mightily embarrassed by such attentions. Not so, Fretful. He just turned on his hind legs and met Snip-Nose, the tail dog, an' done it so quick, the dog bit right into Fretful's face, an' Fretful rooted with his tusks. Huh! Snip-Nose was lopsided for life, account of that awful rip in his face.

And Yap-Jaw, surprized at the hog's fightingness but gratified, caught the tail-holt himself. Yes, sir! He shore straightened Fretful's tail! My land! Well, Fretful flopped and squealed and whip-cracked Yap-Jaw, hooking him in the side, so's it skinned about forty square inches off his ribs. Yes, sir!

Well, those two promising kioodles left for home, an' the hog run 'em in, and his appetite satisfied, he slipped into the laurels, an' Si-Hank Loukes when he seen the damage, and the hog, was too late getting his skurrel rifle.

Generally speaking, hard, mean feelings in the mountangs is caused when a dog tails a hog, or somebody imposes on a hog, and is found out. But here was a hog that was imposing on dogs. That was different, and it made lots laugh, so Si-Hank went mad, and he 'lowed he could be as mean as Flet Fillune, any day. But, you know, he couldn't start in real enthusiastic. The more he was mad, blowing about his dogs being tore up by a hog, the more plumb ridiculous he knowed he was.

Hogs ain't no spirit, generally speaking. They's mighty lively, when they're pigs, but soon settle down to be fat an' wallowing an' porky. Even razor-backs loses their gyp in two-three years, but not Fretful! No, indeed! Fretful growed tall, but his ribs was plain, an' his head was long-snouted, and his eyes prominent. Yes, sir. His eyes stuck out both sides; nobody ever met that hog that didn't wonder what on earth, just like that, and would look twicet, and strangers allowed he was a ghost hog, seeing him near some graveyard, or ha'nt house. 'Twant natural, havin' buck eyes into a hog.

So theh you was, Si-Hank Loukes feeling mean and ridiculous, and Flet Fillune indifferent and watchful. Si-Hank was held back, account of Flet having no relations around to vengefy him. He couldn't be killed up, off-hand like, without no excuse but his or'nary hog. That hog just ranged the same as ever, and people waited, hoping that in time Flet would get to kill 'im, and enjoy the sausage. You know how some men are, though, never doing what the neighbors regard as their obliging duty.

That hog went through the second hog-sticking, meaner and or'narier than ever. Si-Hank hunted him, like he was a deer. He denied it, but shucks!—his actions showed plain as could be. Somebody shot at Fretful, oveh on Steeple Ridge, putting a bullet plumb through his ear. Want Flet Fillune mad, though! Fretful Muncher was made fleet and suspicious, but Flet wasn't grateful.

He ransacked around, found three .32-20 empty shells on the hog's bleeding back track, and that was Si-Hank's rifle size. Si-Hank thought the hog bled so much it must be hard hit, and would die. He was so careless and proud at what he'd done that he went over to Trouble Flats where he celebrated and bragged. He'd settled Fretful, he 'lowed! If he'd killed a man, he couldn't of lugged around more.

So, course, Flet heard and knowed Si-Hank had shot his hog. That was, course, excuse enough for any man to have his honor satisfied, but Si-Hank just bought a new box of ammunition, while Flet bought a new rifle, a repeating .25-35. There it was! Peace in the mountang country all blown to pieces just because of that blamed old hog. If Flet'd had relations, hit'd been almighty serious, too. Flet, course, was partly to blame, account of his not killing that hog when it was time. Course, though, it was his hog, an' nobody has a right to tell a man when to kill his hog.

The next any one knew, Si-Hank was shot dead. He never knowed what hit him. The Government sat on him, and found he was hit by a bullet, plumb through the heart, by some person unknown. Course, everybody knew, but how could they prove it? They couldn't. Si-Hank wasn't much of a man, not for a neighbor. He was too independent and trifling for good company. Still, he was a man and Fretful Muncher was a hog.

People said it was a pretty pass, when a man died for a hog, but at the same time that hog was so much more of a hog than Si-Hank was a man that it kind of passed off, so-so. Flet didn't gain anything by it. Si-Hank's brother, from over yon side Cinch valley, rode over on his mule, to settle up the estate. Joe-Cal Loukes wasn't any

mean, trifling man, no indeed! He was no more like Si-Hank than the hog was like a high-bred big-bone dorik hog.

JOE-CAL just rode up, tossed the lines of his mule over the post, and walked into the house, the day before the funeral. He didn't say much, except to condole the widow and pat the chilluns on their heads. He took charge immediate, and right away everybody saw he had a strong hand, and a good counsel.

Well, he settled up the estate and raised more than anybody knowed Si-Hank had. Found a sixty-acre chunk of virgin timber that was supposed to be the Government's, and things like that, so there want no debts but assets, and the widow was rich, according to the settlement where folks 'lowed she'd have to be country-almsed, or marry again.

Joe-Cal settled up the financial aspects of the case so quick, nobody allowed he had any heart in him at all. Never a word about the killing, nor anything about the murdering. He just saw the lawing provided for, and the writing and details all aspected according. In ten days he was all through except the county-paper advertising, and the legal expirations of debt limits, and so on.

"Now," he said, calm as that, "now Mr. Goling, will you kindly tell me just where that hog Fretful Muncher lives, when he's to home?"

Just like that he asked it! Why, I was struck so dumb he had to ask again, them very words, before I could answer. Yes, sir! He settled the status of Flet Fillune's position in the community by referring to his domicile as a hog's place of abode. Sho! Three-four heard him speak, and they just gasped. Flet Fillune, bad's he was, had aspired to be human. Now he was tenant on a hog's farm. My land!

I met Flet that evening, an hour before sunset, and he asked me pointed what Joe-Cal was going to do about his brother being dead? I said he had already done it. Flet demanded—

"Did he kill my hog?"

"No," I told him, plain as A B C, "he ain't killed your hog, Flet. You know I am neutral. I ain't no hard, mean feelings toward anybody."

"What's he done?"

"He just asked where that hog Fretful Muncher lived, when he was at home."

Flet didn't see nothing, at first. He want what's called a fast thinker. He has to go way back somewhere, set and think, probably an hour or two, to get his mind aroun' anything new and unusual. But Joe-Cal got to his mind right quick; yes, indeed.

"He asked where that hog lives, not where I live?" he demanded, sudden.

"Yes, and lots heard him ask, too," I told him.

Yes, sir, I've seen men insulted, an' I've seen 'em take it like a dog takes a cat by the back, or like water takes to a greased harness. Flet was insulted. His hog was set above him. At that rate, he'd get to be a joke, and he couldn't stand that. He wanted to know where Joe-Cal was at, but I said I didn't know. How'd I know if he was in the house, or in the yard, or down by the branch, or where he was around Si-Hank's?

You can't insult people like Flet Fillune, promiscuous. If you do it, you better do it deliberate, knowing the consequences. Joe-Cal Loukes had it all figured out. He made the prettiest insult, that day, I ever did see. My land! I wouldn't have missed his saying so, or seeing Flet Fillune realize it, not for a heap, no indeedy!

And theh was that hog, to home. Yes, sir. Fretful Muncher, with that old plow-head of his, an' his flat shoulders, and sway-belly, and his long, deer legs, was right there, rolling his big eyes as he wallowed through the squeezed sorgum-cane, eating about a bale of it. See what a hole it put Flet Fillune in? That hog was responsible. If Flet had killed Si-Hank, the hog was to blame. If Flet hadn't been stubborn, an' had killed that hog when the natural time come, making sausage and smoking-bacon, and hams, besides fresh roasting-pork, there wouldn't have been any trouble.

Now Flet just naturally had to back that hog up. The time when he could honorably kill that hog was done gone. The hog was just naturally Flet's and if he killed that hog, now, people'd say he was afraid of the consequences. A man can't afford to let on he's afraid, especially if he's some worried, and even skeered. Joe-Cal, Si-Hank's brother, had touched hard on the hog's being such an all-fired hog, while the owner was just a hill-billy, not no 'count, course, exactly, but no way as much of a man as that hog was a hog.

Yes, sir, that hog, with his name and his

reputation, was liable to make the humans wonder how come hit such a feller as Flet come to own a hog like him, anyhow, the same as people wonder how such fellers as does raises such doggone fine-blooded horses, er goats, er such stock. There's something just plumb ridiculous about a man owning a specially good mule, and it's the same way with owning a hog. Flet was sure predicamented.

Course, being mad, and having so much on his mind, he done the wrong thing. Seeing the law wasn't going to do anything to him, he tried to talk big and brag about his hog. He 'lowed nobody had eveh had such a hog. He sort of double-dared anybody to talk down that hog. Nobody did, course.

AND then come the new road the Government built right down the back of the ridge. This road is banked up, for forty miles, and is wide enough for two automobiles to pass a team of mules both at once. That road come through, almost before the rumor got around that it was coming. No sooner was the grade made, an' the cuts and fills begun than tourists begun to come through, same as you be, stranger.

Yes, sir! They come through in crowds. Why, hardly a week went by, from that day to this, that some tourist didn't come through, and there's been three er four tourists crowding the road up, lots of times, in a week. Well, sir, tourists give Flet Fillune's hog publicity. The hog come along that highway, and helped plow the right of way, along the survey line, breaking the sod. Course, that's just a joke, one of our mountang jokes, you might say. I don't suppose Fretful Muncher done any more plowing in the right of way than any other hog, proportionating it. Still, when the tourists begun to come through, that old hog sure made himself conspicuous up and down these parts.

Ho law! You'd died a-laughing to see that hog come along to one of them touring campers. The first one I see, I never would forget. It was a big car, with a fambly into it, old man, wife and couple chilluns, an' they had shack-tents on both sides the automobile, and when I come by after daylight as they camped by Pebble Spring, they was getting breakfast, with a hot fire under sort of wire andirons, and open-topped stove. They had white kettles a-boiling, and frying-pans a-smoking, and on a funny little jigger of a table, they had bread and cups and canned-milk, and lots of plates, knifes, and so on, things to eat and to eat 'em with.

Well, just as I come in sight, I seen Fretful coming up-wind toward that open-house-keeping. I stopped my hosses to see. Sho! He went right up and he'ped himse'f! He could stand on his hind legs, like a deer, and he had a loaf of bread, before that family seen what he was up to. He set into a bag of apples, on the ground, while they was running to avenge the bread, and he double turned on 'em, and run between the man's legs, and upset the lady, as she squealed, and the last I seen of him, that hog was on the run into the timber, with an orange between his jaws, and his eyes bulging with satisfaction and expectancy. All this in about fifteen seconds.

Well, those tourists didn't wait to make another breakfast. They hurried on. They eat breakfast ten miles west, that morning. That hog knowed tourists was better feeding than around the cabins and houses. I suppose he had been shot at some, on the sly, fine shot and so on, but tourists wouldn't do that, not knowing how the owner might feel about it, though the hog was five miles from home—they dassn't to do anything.

Course, things like that don't help a country's reputation none. I suppose those tourists that had experiences with Flet Fillune's hog went back home, and told the doggonedest stories about hogs down in our country, not knowing that this was only just one hog, and no other hog like him anywhere in the country. Even for our country, he was a most extraordinary hog. Tourists had some spunk sometimes though, especially men from hog country themselves. Fretful had some experiences. He come home once mighty sick.

Somebody had shot him with a .22 short, and I tell you, Flet was mad! He took a prejudice against tourists, right then and there. He didn't do anything. Still, he harbored them hard feelings. At the same time, it was good business for him, in a way, too. Them automobiles come right by his door, and every once in a while, one'd stop right there by his house, and ask could he accommodate them, with a wink, and so on. Course, Flet was able to do that.

He come to be pretty well known among

some tourists who think we folks in Fire-Slash Country are all moonshiners and feud-fighters and so on. He sure was the only one anywhere around us that was or'nary, but account of him having his still there on his branch-run, up by the limestone bluff, he raised enough trouble to satisfy our whole country.

Yes, sir; men like Flet Fillune and hogs like his Fretful ain't common citizens. He made a right nice line of white mule, and it sort of spread around among them tourists he was doing it, so they stopped along there, and he didn't have to patronize local trade none, at all, selling all to the strangers coming through, who passed the word along.

He played to good luck, too. His white mule went away off yonder, and none ever come into local trade at all. Outsiders paid lots better prices, and took all he made. And us local people minded our own business about his still, same as we did about his hog. Both was nuisances, but Flet had some feelings it wa'nt advisable to hurt.

Like lots of those kinds, he just let it be known that he wouldn't stand no nonsense from anybody. No, sir! If anybody interfered with his business, they'd better look out. There ain't many roads, in our country, and anybody that lives around us is sure obliged to go up or down one road, and no more. Men like Flet is accommodated a lot by that condition, course.

Well, the revenuers come in three or four times, but didn't find anything. They come in as commercial travelers, banjo-pickers, and all those old gags. They didn't get anything. They knowed white mule was going down the line, for it showed off yonder, and it had the mountang brand of results.

THEN one day some tourists came along, three men seeing the country, and good sports, stopping to shoot rabbits and quail, and fish for bass and trout. Lawse! They camped down by Fallsink Branch, and made friends with everybody. For about a week, they didn't learn anything, and then along comes that blamed hog, Fretful Muncher. Fretful was sure in a condition and a tearing. My land! I never saw a hog acting so in my borned days.

His tail was curled, and stuck straight up. One ear, where Si-Hank had shot him, was lopped, while the other was standing up, broad like a doe's ears. His big head was bobbing, and I couldn't believe my eyes, but his long hind legs and his long front legs was cross-stepping every time he walked or run. My land, but he was an awful comical sight, considering what a serious hog he was. I looked around to see if Flet was in sight before I laughed. You see, Flet felt mean about that hog, not knowing but when people laughed at it they was thinking about him, insultingly.

Well, I seen those three strangers regard that hog with interest, but I didn't suspect anything. No, indeed! I hope to die I didn't, stranger! Well, those strangers made friends with that hog. They did. Nobody else that I eveh knowed in that country, tried kindness toward that hog. They fed him, they talked friendly to him, and they aroused his delight and gratitude. Course, I don't mean to say any hog eveh had gratitude, or anything but an appetite, and devilment, but it looked thataway about that hog.

That hog just settled down in that camp, and they treated him right. When they went out, he went out, and when they come in, he come in. So things went for about a week, and then the Flet Fillune still was raided, in full action, and they had Fillune arrested, handcuffed and on his way to jail.

Course, when Flet Fillune sent word he wanted bondsmen three-four of us went down and bailed him out. When a neighbor like him wants to be accommodated, theh's always somebody going to do it, just so nothing will happen. Course, Flet would be coming back, even if he was convicted, and served time. Serving time never did help the tempers of men like him. I never did believe in sending that kind to jail, anyhow. They always come out uglier and meaner than they were when they went in, so the Govenment ought to leave them alone.

Flet signed his bond, right surly, and not saying much, but grunting so we could all see he was mean. Seemed like he had lost faith in everybody. Even toward me he was short and closed-up, like a barrel. Well, he went back up the mountang road, riding his hoss, fit to kill. We never thought anything about it, but he went straight home, and got his spare rifle, which he had in his house, the revenuers having confiscated and sealed his other guns, to the still-house, pending trial.

He took that rifle and went into the brush. People saw him, and nobody knew who he suspected of betraying him, spying on him. He was liable to shoot anybody he suspicioned, course. We didn't have a light in my house, not for ten days. Then Flet Fillune sent word around that we should all come to a barbecue. Course, everybody went, excepting the kinfolks of Si-Hank who couldn't be expected to show that much friendliness.

Flet had a powerful lot of meat for that barbecue, wild turkeys, a deer, about a bushel of quail and so on, but nobody gave more'n a look at these things, no indeed! There hung that big, lank, gangling Fretful Muncher, shot through the side, in the heart, just like a deer. Curly-haired old scoundrel, his owner had got him at last!

Yes, sir! Flet didn't hold it up against any human, him being took for moonshining. He was betrayed by his hog, which had been coming around the still house, eating the mash that Flet fed him in a trough—sour mash, warm and full of fire. The revenuers had followed that hog into the still, raided it, and nabbed Flet.

Flet was grim, and mad. Anybody could see that. He never smiled once. When that hog was roasted, he slabbed off big chunks of it, and served it all around. We all ate. We all had to. Doggone it, but that pork was the hardest to swallow any of us ever did have to bite. If pork wasn't the most satisfying meat in the world, I declare, that meal likely would have set me against hog meat for the rest of my life. It did, some that was there.

None of us had any love for that blamed old hog, but at the same time, he had his name, and he was, if not amusing, mighty interesting, and if it wasn't like eating a pet, I don't know what is. Well, it was a barbecue we won't forget, none of us. We couldn't hardly miss it, at the same time, eating Fretful Muncher took the edge off our appetites.

Flet Fillune was scowling around, wearing his belt and hiding his side-arms under his coat. He was sober and mean. He'd lost his occupation when they raided and carried in his still. Sort of took the gumption out of him. He wanted an excuse for trouble. We could all see that.

Nobody gave him an excuse. He went off after a while, and I reckoned he'd forfeit his bond. He scouted out off and on for the next three months, waiting for his trial. He come over to my place, about a week before the trial, bringing his two hound dogs with him.

I could see he'd either established another still, or found somebody who was taking his place. He was mean and ugly. He started in to talk politics, but I agreed with him. He talked prohibition and revenuers, and I agreed with him on them, too. He was pretty onsulting, sometimes, but I held my peace. I didn't want trouble with any man.

BUT, you know, there's some things nobody is called on to stand. He abused me, talking me down, as though I hadn't always been neutral and honorable toward him. Then, right there before my eyes, he set them two hound dogs on my old sow Betsy, and her litter of eleven pigs. She's a fine breeder, that sow, and her pigs are red as hill-cattle. Well, you know those dogs tore one of the pigs to pieces, and that hill-billy scoundrel laughed at me.

A man don't have to stand that from anybody. I'd kind of expected trouble. No matter how peaceable a man is, trouble comes to him. If he's a man, he has to meet hit, face to face, depending on no man but himself. I told Flet friendly, and honorable, to call off his dogs. He laughed at me. When he set them on the pigs again, I hauled up with my long-barreled six-shot revolver, an' as they coursed side by side, killed both with one shot.

Yes, suh! I hit one through the neck, an' one through the fore-shoulder, an' those dogs made three short jumps, stopped and stood plumb bewildered for a minute. One drapped daid. The otheh jest laid down like he was going to sleep.

Flet was laughing, hiein' them dogs on, an' didn't see me draw my gun. He didn't know I 'lowed to shoot till I'd pulled the trigger. He stood theh, starin' at those two dogs a-dying, the most astonished man anybody eveh did get to see. He was paralyzed. Then he gave a whoopin' yell, turning on me.

Yes, sir! He had his gun in his hand, an' theh was the condition. He turned, an' stood a-looking at me. One move'n I'd shore had to kill that man. Time had be'n when Flet jes' 'lowed he'd neveh s'render to nobody. Now he hesitated. He took to figurin' on his chances. That big black .45

muzzle aimed plumb center on him, betwixt his stomach and his lungs shore looked mighty certain.

He drapped his shoulder gun, putting up his hands. I didn't say a word. Course, I took him down to County Co'rt again. I accused him of disturbin' the peace, and I demanded that they put him under a peace bond. The law hadn't neveh meant nothing to him, in times gone. Now Flet hunted around to find somebody that'd risk one hundred dollars on him being peaceable. Nobody would. He set theh in the jail come six weeks. Men that'd be'n scared of him an' had to go out around his hawg, less'n Flet be mad, wouldn't let him have one hundred dollars on that chance of his bein' peaceable with me.

One day he sent word to me. I went to see him. For the first time in his life he 'poligized, an' begged. If I didn't let up on him, he'd lie in jail all his life. If I'd buy his old place he'd leave the country. I paid him more'n he asked, and some people said I was jes' plumb foolish. I paid what that place was worth, 'cordin' to land selling around there. An' had po'r old Flet to my house, while he was building a shanty-boat oveh on the Cumberland River, to trip off down to the Ohio and Mississippi.

Yes, suh, that hog Fretful Muncher sure broke Flet Fillune, and left him jes' plain an' or'nary, same's the rest of us. A man ain't no idee, the possibilities that's into a hog, 'specially a razor-back hog. Course, them hogs averages no 'count, take 'em as they run, some worsen' othehs, but sometimes a man makes a mistake about 'em, at that. Take my advice, don't mind a hog. Leave 'm alone. If Flet Fillune'd jes' be'n ca'm an' usual about his hog, instead of makin' a right special hog out'n Fretful Muncher, why that man'd lived along all his life, jes' like anybody, an' no harm come.

But no! Flet give that hog proud an' high-falutin' feelings, an' next Flet knew, he couldn't back up er back down. It jes' drove him out the country, leaving lots that was glad he was gone, and nobody that was sorry.

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

by Hugh Pendexter

ACCORDING to Hallum's "History of Arkansas," gambling games of various kinds were carried on in the presence of the court in that State prior to 1829. Not necessarily in the presence of each presiding judge, but did lawyers, or spectators, feel inclined to place a bet there was no harm done if a faro bank was opened, or any other game begun.

A faro bank was run in the court-house at Van Buren while court was being held in an adjoining room. It is not stated that any jury was hung up overtime because of a bank game being operated for their enjoyment after they received the judge's charge; but jurors are human.

However, if the manners of those ancient times dismay our citizens today there was a compensating directness of obtaining results that would refresh many men—perhaps women—in 1923. It is told that a notorious desperado, usually keeping in the backwoods of Arkansas, wandered to town when court happened to be in session. A new judge was on the bench and it was not supposed that he knew the country and temper of the ne'er-do-wells as did his predecessors.

Anyway, the bad-man swaggered into town and commenced satisfying his cosmic urge for "cawn licker." He was a bad man; very bad. The sheriff informally advised him to withdraw from the settlement until after court adjourned. The desperado slapped the knife-handle protruding from a bootleg and confided his personal opinion of the judge to the sheriff, and requested him to repeat his words to his honor.

The sheriff trotted to the court-house and did as told. His honor, frail of physique, gravely declared a recess for twenty minutes and went over to the groggery. The bad-man was still at the bar. Walking up to him, his honor seized him by his hairy throat, presented a short-barreled, murderous-looking pistol to his breast and commanded:

"——you! Come into court and answer to your name and the indictment against you."

The bad-man followed him like a lamb and meekly listened to the sentence "as the court has recorded it."

APPEARANCES

A Complete Novelette by F. R. Buckley

Author of "Habit," "Flor de Garfield," etc.

"O-o-o-o, the parson stood on the altar steps
And he cried 'My son, beware!
She's Indian, French, and Irish mixed—
Dynamite, with care!' "

HAVING completed his rending rendition of which, Mr. Jake Henson alighted in the shadow of the Three Pines International Emporium & Sheriff's Office, hitched his horse to the porch railing, took off a pair of holiday gloves distinguished from the everyday article by the Lone Star in red on their backs; and ambled up the veranda steps.

"Hello, Bill!" he caroled, peering with glare-blinded eyes into the comparative darkness of the store.

"Hello," came a feeble reply. "Hello, Jake. Welcome—ow! Welcome home."

With a despairing shake of the head, Mr. Henson stepped over the threshold, crossed to the counter and, seating himself on it with his hands covering his kneecaps, stared broodingly at what looked like an armchair swaddled in blankets.

"The devil's gettin' his rake-off again, I see," he remarked.

"I guess he is, Jake," said the invisible person in the chair.

For in Three Pines Valley, over which Mr. Garfield ruled in the capacities of sheriff, postmaster, station-master, and registrar of vital statistics, there was a legend to the effect that fifty years ago, while in his tempestuous twenties and the still more tempestuous Rangers, the old gentleman had made one of those celebrated medieval dickers with Satan, in which, owing to his youth and inexperience, Mr. Garfield had come off second-best. The bargain had been one left leg against complete invulnerability, and it was admitted that now, in his seventy-second year, the aged sheriff possessed both a timber toe and the capacity to absorb incredible quantities of lead without apparent discomfort. But in the pride of his youth aforesaid, old Bill had never so much as thought of inflammatory rheumatism, and it was with this variation of hell-fire that the Tempter was supposed to afflict his former client.

"How did you get this lot?" Mr. Henson inquired sternly.

Bill Garfield made an effort and extruded a wrinkled and trembling hand from the pile of Navajo textiles.

"Before I go into that matter," said he, raising himself until his kindly old face, with its fringe of alkali-whitened gray whiskers was visible. "I got to ask a favor of you, Jake—I said I'd got two to ask when I phoned you at the Circle S. You see that clock over there, Jake. It was given me last week by the Acacia Chamber of Commerce for killin' them two bank-robbers. Well, Jake, it's now three minutes before two

"Appearances," copyright, 1923, by F. R. Buckley.

o'clock, and on the hour a condemned little trap-door is going to open and a condemned little bird is going to stick its head out and sing two bars of a condemned little song. Get me?"

"Sure I get you," said the big deputy soothingly. "It's a cuckoo clock. Whatcher gettin' so excited about, Bill?"

"When that trap-door opens," cried Mr. Garfield hysterically, "I want you to pull a gun, Jake, and shoot that bird dead. I can't tell you what I been through, sittin' here these last two days with that buzzard shriekin' in my ear every hour. Nobody's been past, an' I couldn't ruin my reputation by phonin' somebody to come and help me, nor I haven't bin able to use my arms either to reach the clock or throw anythin'. I bin sittin' here groanin' an' tryin' to think, an' just as I was goin' to get a good hearty grunt out of me, or think two consecutive thoughts that had anythin' to do with each other, that blazin' blue canary would start playin' peep-bo an' howlin' at me. I want you to——"

"How," asked Mr. Henson, "about just plain stoppin' the clock?"

"Do it quick, then!" roared the old gentleman. "She's clearin' her throat to sing!"

Mr. Henson obeyed. The clock's pendulum stopped swinging in the nick of time, and the bird already out on the platform whence it was accustomed to sing the glad tidings of the time, remained petrified, staring dumbly down on the store.

"I'm thinkin' of givin' up the peace-officer business," said the sheriff of Three Pines miserably. "I bin in it fifty years, an' what's the use? You chase after criminals, and you either catch 'em or you don't. If you do catch 'em, they give you cuckoo clocks, if you don't catch 'em, you catch rheumatism."

"Who've you bin tryin' to catch?" asked the deputy.

In spite of his expressed disgust with the whole science of criminology, Mr. Garfield visibly brightened. The menace of the cuckoo had bowed him down much more than had the rheumatism. With it removed, he bobbed up into the semblance of life, hope and joy again with surprizing rapidity. It was obvious, for instance, that he took a new interest in what landscape could be seen through the open door—a stretch of mixed alkali and grassland extending from his porch clear back to the lavender-colored hills which fringed the Rio Grande. Furthermore, he felt he wanted tobacco for the first time in nearly an hour; and there was quite an appreciable amount of snap in the request he made of Jake to roll him a brown one.

"It's a funny dispensation of Providence, ain't it," piped the old gentleman, "that when sick you have to smoke these ready-made goods, which make you sicker yet? Don't lick the paper, please. Well, I suppose you heard the recent rumors that somebody's bin rustlin' stock?"

Jake stuck the cigaret in his chief's mouth, lighted a match on his thumb-nail, and wrinkled his nose in scorn.

"Yeah—I heard 'em," he said. "Heard 'em way over at Circle S. Nothin' to it, Bill. You know yourself they always say that when a new man comes into the district, and the way the fences are around here, it's a wonder they don't have to have a general round-up every week. Anyway, I've met young Rensley, and he's a nice square *hombre*, and I don't believe he'd rustle so much as a dead leaf."

Mr. Garfield took a comforting drag on his cigaret.

"What success I've enjoyed as a sheriff," he remarked "has been largely due to my never overlooking any bet. So though I didn't for a moment think any wrong of the newcomer in our midst, I did just sort of sashay around the flowering prairies for a couple of nights, sniffing the breeze for the smell of illicit branding. M'yes."

"Did you find any?"

"M'no."

"Well, then?"

"M'well—I found something else. Would you be so good, Jake, as to kind of bend your gaze out of the doorway, and tell me whether I'm right in thinkin' yon distant rider is on a paint pony that interferes some?"

Jake dismounted from the counter, shaded his eyes with his hand, and stared conscientiously for half a minute.

"Might be ridin' a hippopotamus for all I can see," he reported at length. "I'm no telescope, Bill."

"You're not old enough to have long sight, you mean," said Mr. Garfield. "Now I am. I will therefore hurry through the rest of my interesting narrative, because that guy is John W. Hope, Esquire, on his way here, and I'd like you to have the dope

before he arrives. You know it ain't considered nice to import Chinese laborers across the Mexican border, don't you?"

"Some people consider it mighty nice," said the deputy. "There's twenty dollars a head in it, for the man that does the importing. But if you mean from our standpoint, why yes, the trade has its drawbacks. Who's this guy Hope? Is he doin' it?"

"He's kind of a gentleman down here on a holiday, according to him," said the sheriff. "And he's not only doin' that by way of earnin' pocket-money for the time bein', but until a couple of days ago, he was getting all fixed to marry old Manoel da Silva's daughter Marcia. Hot dog and bully boy with the glass eye. Well, he's suddenly become *persona non* grated with the old don, but——"

"How come?"

"How should I know?" asked Mr. Garfield innocently. "You wouldn't suspect me of riding over to da Silva's and saving his daughter from an ugly marriage by tipping him off to something I was quite certain of but couldn't prove in court, would you? No, of course you wouldn't. Where was I before you butted in?"

"You were just goin' to tell me how you got the dope on this guy's man-smugglin'," said Jake.

"There ain't time for that," said the sheriff. "I just sort of saw shadowy figures in the dark, and if one of them happened to call out in Hope's voice, why of course that wouldn't go with a jury. What I was going to tell you, was what we do next. And that is that you keep your weather-eye severely fixed on this jasper, by night and by day, if you know what I mean."

"Uh-huh," said Jake. "Say, does he know he's suspected?"

Mr. Garfield watched the approaching horseman closely for perhaps ten seconds before he replied.

"He ain't supposed to, Jake," said he at last. "But he's urgin' his horse hitherward so fervently that I have a sort of sneakin' idea that he does. If I were you, Jake, I rather think I'd get the checkers board from behind the stove there, an' spread a few men on it as if we were beguilin' our intellects with innocent sport. Speakin' of sports, I don't know but what you better hadn't hand me my left-hand gun out of the belt—the one with the four nicks. We may have some shootin,' too."

"What'll be the signal?" asked the deputy, taking advantage of the novel circumstances to crown himself six queens.

"My droppin' dead," snapped Mr. Garfield. "Until then, you keep right on playin' checkers. I'll handle the indoor end of this so long as I'm stuck in this chair. Say, what are you trying to do over your end of the board? Make a crowned republic, or somep'n? Why not have one plain man for them queens to rule over, huh?"

"Things have changed since you was a boy," said Mr. Henson, cheerfully taking four of his senior's men. "They have steam on the railroads now, and prac-tic-ally everybody owns at least one motor-car. Your move, Bill."

So that it was upon a violent argument between the Three Pines forces for righteousness that Mr. John Hope stumbled when, having hitched his pony beside Jake's, he entered and stood at the side of the checkerboard.

"A deputy that would make his queens move as in poker," Mr. Garfield was shouting, "is positively no deputy of mine! Do you get me?"

With one motion Mr. Henson flung the checkerboard to the floor, and with another, he unpinned the star which decorated his holiday silk shirt.

"All right," he snarled, rising and flinging the badge contemptuously into Mr. Garfield's lap. "Then do your own dirty work in the future, ol' bag-o'-bones! If I ain't fit to be your deputy——"

"*He*," broke in Mr. Hope suavely, "is, no doubt in your opinion as well as mine, unfit to carry porridge to a dog."

"Yes, he is!" roared Jake Henson.

Catching Mr. Garfield's eye, he dropped both his voice and the hand which, in the excitement of the moment, he had raised toward the waistband of his holiday trousers. Mr. Henson was neither a man accustomed to let anybody else malign his boss, nor a Westerner of the type who carries a gun which is supposed to be used in a hip pocket where it cannot possibly be reached.

"I don't know you, do I?" he asked Hope in a lower tone.

"Not yet," said the newcomer with a charming smile, "but—you will. Just at present, however, my business is with this interesting legal antique. While you, whom I suppose to be its curator, were away, would you believe that it has actually been dogging my footsteps, and then going

around accusing me of evading the immigration laws?"

Noticing that a flood of brick-red coloration was beginning to crawl above the line of Mr. Garfield's decent gray shirt-collar, Mr. Henson moved before replying. The hand of a rheumatic man, however experienced, can not be relied upon not to shake and, once, separated from its parent cartridge, a .45 bullet is youthfully incapable of distinguishing friends from foes. With a labored slowness, Jake took a seat behind the stove, and thence remarked that after what he'd seen and heard of Mr. Garfield that afternoon, he could believe anything.

"Unfortunately," said Mr. Hope, through his teeth, "there are other people who will believe anything, too. Apparently my ex-friend Don Manoel da Silva is one of them."

"Things ain't always as they appear," said old Bill slowly. "I've known some mighty likely young men come to untimely sarcophaguses, which is a kind of tomb, through thinkin' appearances meant what they looked like."

"Why, you old gray rat!" bellowed Hope. "Look at this!"

He brandished a square of heliotrope-colored notepaper.

"If you want me to read it," the sheriff inquired gently, "don't you think you'd better hold it still?"

"I don't want you to read it! Do you think I want old yobs like you going through my private correspondence with ladies? All I want you to know is what's in it, so that you'll know what I'm horsewhipping you for when I start in!"

"You wouldn't horsewhip me," Mr. Garfield told him with childlike confidence.

"Why not, eh? Because you're old enough to be dead long since, and happen to have a pain in your leg. You were well enough to write——"

"No," said the sheriff. "Just because you've left your whip outside on your pony, and as you re-entered the door after going to fetch it, I should kind of inevitably blow the stomach out of you. See?"

The Colt with the four nicks in the butt slid forth from under the blankets and stared at the raging Hope with leaden eyes.

"M'yes," said the gun's owner. "I kind of thought you'd take pity on me. Things ain't always as they seem, now are they? Many a quiet man's more dangerous than many a noisy one, and almost every day we see the lamentable spectacle of a guy who's unfit to be a purp's sutler beating some college-graduate on the draw. You were about to remark that I'd been malignin' you to Manoel da Silva, and that he'd told his daughter why he'd forbidden you the house, and that she had written you a kind of *sub-rosa* letter, explainin' pa's rash act?"

Hope flushed and crammed the letter into his pocket. Mr. Garfield noted the movement with bright old eyes.

"Silly of her to write you unbeknownst to her Spanish poppa," said the sheriff musingly. "Worse'n silly for you to come howlin' the contents of the letters all over the landscape. She won't be pleased with you for that."

"Oh, you'll tell her, all right," snarled Hope.

"What talking I do, I generally do to men," said Mr. Garfield through his teeth. "But, having been right outside the store for the last three minutes, I think it's rather likely the young lady's overheard your bellowing for herself. See?"

Hope spun around on his heel.

In point of fact, Marcia da Silva herself was not in sight; but through the doorway, like a seventeenth-century picture in a rather rhomboidal frame, there showed enough of her entourage to make the deduction of her presence quite easy. On a mule whose dropsical girth blocked off from Mr. Garfield's view the entire Three Pines range of hills, sat an antique duenna, who chewed tobacco and spat over long ranges with a remarkably flat trajectory. The head of another mule, of gentler breed, caparisoned with bells, and equipped with bannerets for the discouragement of flies, just came into the picture at the right, and on its bridle rested a long white hand which could have belonged to no girl in the neighborhood but the da Silva heiress. But the whole center of the picture was occupied by a man who stood squarely on the ground on his own feet and was to judge by the lifting angle of his rather prominent jaw, looking Marcia da Silva in the eyes.

"Did you say a pound of starch, miss?" he was asking levelly, "or just a box?"

"A pound, but my father—"

"That makes soap, embroidery thread, a pound of starch *and* the list of groceries to be sent," remarked the man in the center of the picture. "I'm sure your dad would prefer you'd wait here, Miss Marcia."

"You are my master, of course," said a girl's voice whose resignation did not disguise its inflection of scorn.

"I'm here to see you don't come to no harm," said the young man unemotionally. "Was there anything else, Miss Marcia?"

Answered, apparently, by a shake of the head, Mr. Robert Rensley, owner, manager, foreman, and ten per cent. of the punchers of the Bar O outfit, slowly put on his battered Stetson, and marched up the steps of the International Emporium. Having mounted these, and crossed the veranda, he stepped over Mr. Garfield's worn lintel and, in a matter-of-fact manner pulled to and bolted the door behind him.

This done, he suspended his hands by the thumbs from his cartridge-belt, and looked directly at John W. Hope.

"You'd oblige me," he stated simply, "by keeping your trap shut, mister. Do I make myself clear?"

"Jake!" piped Mr. Garfield suddenly.

The big deputy loomed over the top of the stove.

"No, I don't want you officially, Jake," said the sheriff, "but would you mind picking me and this chair up and putting us somewhere else. Just one moment, gentlemen. At my age, and with the vital statistics in the mess they're in already, I can't——"

Rensley looked at the old gentleman as he was removed aerially to a place behind the stove, and smiled.

"There ain't goin' to be any shootin', Mr. Garfield," he remarked. "I'm just askin' this gentleman to do his loose talkin' in a lower tone. This is breedin' season for the coyotes, an' competition makes the poor animals nervous."

Hope spoke in a voice choked with rage.

"I should have thought," he said indistinctly, "that your way of doing that would have been to shoot me. It's a short cut, and you're very fond of short cuts, aren't you?"

"Meanin'——?"

"Meaning—" began Hope, stepping closer to the young man. "Meaning——"

"Now, boys, boys!" warned Mr. Garfield waveringly.

"Meaning," shouted Hope angrily, "you're an American, aren't you? Yes, when it suits your purpose. But when it's a short cut, you can make love to a girl's father like any darn Señor Don Chili con Carne, can't you?"

"I wouldn't talk that way," said Rensley mildly—but old Bill Garfield was horrified at the sudden change in the expression of his eyes. They had not only become hard, like granite instead of gray silk, but they had started to measure distances, and to take in, with almost imperceptible side-glances, the position of the strategic articles of furniture.

"About six inches further back, Jake," murmured the sheriff, wriggling in his chair. "Gee, I wish I was under my own steam. Thanks."

"Then if you don't like me to talk that way," roared Hope, "what about your other short cut—to getting a herd of cattle together, eh?"

"You mean," asked Rensley through his teeth, "that I'm rustling?"

"Yes, I do!"

"Are you ready for what I'm going to do to you?"

Hope dropped his head a little forward, and threw all his weight on his right leg. Old Bill Garfield knew that posture. It meant a deadly upward kick, which in turn meant six months off horseback for the recipient. But before he could shout a warning it became apparent that Mr. Rensley was also a competent interpreter of attitudes, and that he combined with this proclivity a pleasing inventiveness. To state an exceedingly brief matter as briefly as possible, he substituted for the advance which Hope expected, a lightning-like grab for Hope's forelock and, when he had dragged his adversary within comfortable reach, swung up his disengaged hand in a lazy-looking punch which met the mastoid bone with a thud like that of a mallet on a wedge.

"You shouldn't—" he began, as Hope hurtled sidewise against Bill Garfield's counter, and then ceased talking to attend to business.

The copy-books give us many aphorisms calculated to place young men in graves at early ages; but none, perhaps, more fatally half-true than the motto that bullies are always cowards. A loud and swaggering demeanor generally does mask a rotten spot in the courage; but the extent and location of the decay should be carefully ascertained before battle. Hope, for instance, had a broad yellow streak; but, like most psychological formations, it ran erratically, and failed entirely to color his views of plain

rough-and-tumble fighting. As a rule, it did debar him from the wielding of deadly weapons; but now he was three-quarters insane with fury.

A Ford axle lay on the counter, awaiting a call by Doc Brewer. He swung this upward with the obvious intention of smashing Rensley's skull, for which neighborly act he might have been duly hanged, had not the upper end of the bludgeon caught in the chains supporting Mr. Garfield's hanging lamp. The second of delay sufficed Rensley for a terrible blow to the biceps of Hope's right arm, and the driving in of a jaw-punch which bent the axle-wielder backward over the counter; which position Rensley sought to make permanent by hurling his hundred and seventy pounds of weight unreservedly on his opponent's bosom.

Hope gave a mighty heave with his legs, writhed violently and flailed with his arms; and the next instant had rolled out of sight into the narrow space between the counter and the stock-shelves, Rensley still at his throat.

"Shall I stop it?" gasped Jake Henson, rising.

"You don't drive a boil back underneath the skin, do ya?" asked Mr. Garfield oracularly. "No. But you might move those apricots."

A crash and a sound of rolling fruit-cans announced that the fighters had attended to this formality themselves. Then there was a dull booming sound, several times repeated, as if some one had hammered some one else's head on a board floor; and an instant later, the bowed back of Rensley appeared above the edge of the store's main fixture. He was hoisting an almost unconscious edition of John W. Hope to its feet.

"So that's who's head it was," murmured Mr. Garfield. "Well, now!"

"Have you got a back door?" asked Rensley rather thickly. In the words of the crime reports, his mouth had seemingly suffered from blows with some blunt object; moreover there was a cut on one cheek, and his right eye seemed to have been used for other purposes than those for which it was originally designed, but he was smiling quite pleasantly in spite of these handicaps.

"I've got a little one," said Mr. Garfield, smiling back. "I dump garbage out of it."

"Just exactly the kind of door I want," said Rensley.

He glanced around, located the portal in question, and led Hope to it by the coat-collar.

"I'd advise you," he added to his adversary, "to go right home from here. I don't want to see——"

Hope drew a long, hissing breath.

"You don't imagine," he snarled, "that you're done with me yet, do you, you common rustler?"

Rensley opened the door.

"Ain't got a mite of imagination," he murmured, "but I have got a heavy boot. Are you leavin' us, mister?"

The door closed.

Under the rather startled eyes of old Bill Garfield and his deputy, Mr. Rensley walked slowly back into the middle of the room—and smiled; and at that smile, Mr. Garfield's jaw dropped slightly. As an ancient practitioner of the cheery art of combat, he was accustomed to a certain degree of nonchalance after battle; but this was the first fighter he had seen in two generations, whose post-war grin seemed really genuine. The young man really gave the impression of having forgotten all about the fight; an impression which was heightened by his first subsequent words.

"I'm sorry," said the owner of the Bar O, "to see you got the rheumatism, Mr. Garfield, suh. My father used to say that with an active man, it was almost harder on the nerves than on the body. Kind of wore the nerves to a frazzle, he used to say."

The sheriff's jaw dropped another eighth of an inch.

"Well," he inquired, after a moment, "at that rate, you've never had rheumatism, have you?"

"No."

"Do you imagine," piped the old man in an irritated voice, "that you're done with that guy, or something?"

"No."

"Say, do you realize," boomed Jake Henson urgently, "that you've hooked his girl, beaten him up, and that he's the kind of jasper that decoys you out to help a widow in distress, an' then shoots you in the back from behind a hedge?"

"I wouldn't be a bit surprized," said Rensley.

There was a long silence, at the end of which the young man with the gray eyes coughed deprecatingly.

"At the same time, however," he remarked, "I bet I'd get him first."

"Did you ever happen," asked Jake Henson, "to be compelled to—er—get anybody first, yet?"

"Oh, yes. But if you'll excuse me, gents—I got a lady waitin' for me outside, an' I'm really here on business, kind of."

"Yeah?" asked Mr. Garfield weakly.

"Yeah; what I really came for," said Mr. Rensley, turning busily around toward the shelves, "is soap, embroidery thread one hank, and one box—no, one pound, of the best laundry starch."

IT WOULD have been erroneous to say, and the subject of the remark would have been greatly hurt if any one had said, that Mr. Garfield ran an intelligence bureau in connection with his cigaret-littered sheriff's office. But he had a great many friends—all sorts of queer people, living in all sorts of queer places about Three Pines County, who had developed the habit of dropping in at all sorts of queer hours of the day and night, and telling him all sorts of queer things. Mr. Garfield never paid any of them anything, either in money or canned goods. He was simply a gifted listener and, since nothing will attract human beings from such distances as a chance to narrate sensational events to an appreciative audience, the old sheriff, confined to his armchair, was better informed than the editor of the Gold Creek *Bugle*, who rode forty miles after news every day, but who insisted on having his turn at talking.

For instance, the very day before the *Bugle* published a joyous and jocose editorial on the subsidence of the rustling scare, Mr. Garfield learned from a one-eyed bootlegger that no less than forty head of the Gridiron M's young stock had suddenly gone a-missing in the night; and, what was more to the point, that the local ranch-owners were thinking of forming a protective posse of their own, in view of what the *Bugle*, speaking of another matter, called "the lamentable indisposition of our amiable and venerable sheriff, and the temporary absence of his accomplished deputy, Mr. J. Henson, on a visit to relatives—uncle and aunt—in Longhorn City."

It may be mentioned, further, that while Mr. Garfield had a flying start on the editor, in knowing that Jake was not away on a visit, he started level with him in respect of learning where the deputy actually was; and while the *Bugle* offered one dollar per item for exclusive news, it was to the sheriff, that Block Williamson, the gun-runner came with his question as to whether Jake was entering the arms business or what, flying around the Rio Grande at night the way he was doing.

To this, Mr. Garfield replied that he heard Mr. Williamson had another case of agricultural implements awaiting him at Longhorn City freight-station, and that he would take it kindly if this news about Jake Henson went no further.

A DAILY program of interesting tidings, in short, beguilded the whole week of the old gentleman's captivity and loneliness following the fight between Rensley and Hope, and the departure of Jake Henson to investigate the illicit immigration business. Neither Rensley nor Hope appeared in person; but on Tuesday and Wednesday came respectively news that Rensley had succeeded in hiring eleven punchers coming north from a bankrupt rancho in Old Mexico, and that Hope had advised the Three Pines ranchmen, at an anti-rustling meeting held in Gold Creek, to revive the ancient penalty of death for any person found on the range in possession of a running-iron.

On receipt of this latter item, Mr. Garfield stuck out his underlip pensively. He protruded it again, and kept it out longer, when Thursday morning brought him tidings that ten calves had vanished from the Flying T. In fact, when on Friday afternoon he had the pleasure of a visit from Señor Jesus y Maria da Gonzalez y Pereira, a professional gossip and amateur general in the Mexican Army, the lip was still protruding, and the outlying portions of the sheriff's anatomy were being vigorously massaged with Bortlecog's Royal Indian Anti-Pain Specific. It was said, by those who knew Mr. Garfield intimately, that the state of crime in the county could be accurately judged by the number of empty Bortlecog bottles to be found littering the store. At the moment of the gallant general's entry there were five.

"My dera da frien'!"

"Sit down," snapped Mr. Garfield with unaccustomed brevity. "Cough it up."

The general seated himself, and played Bach fugues with pale lemon-colored fingers.

"Cough up?" he inquired. "I am verra

well, I thanka you—I don't got a cole. I am ovah da Golt Crick, gambl 'a li'l money—speaka my frien's—now I rida home to my armmy, I think I droppa in, say howda you do to my dear frien'——"

"Well, I'm feelin' very sick," said Mr. Garfield, "so that disposes of that. Now tell me somep'n."

Señor da Gonzales y Pereira shrugged.

"Everybody so shorta with me," he complained. "Ranchamen da Protective Associty——"

"If you don't mind my saying so," remarked the sheriff, "I think I could get along better with your Chihuahua Castilian, than your Castilian English."

The *señor* shrugged again.

"I was saying that it seems to me," he observed pessimistically, "that everybody about here is in a bad temper lately. Around the roulette-board, who speaks of love and wine? Nobody. All drink lemonade and talk of hanging."

"Hanging, eh?"

An agonized shrug.

"My friend, at Gold Creek, life is miserable. It appears you are to blame. Cattle have been stolen and you have not caught anybody. Your deputy is away. Very good. The ranch-owners prepare to hang somebody themselves. To talk of hanging, at a roulette-table, is most unlucky."

"It's more unlucky to talk of it under a tree," said Mr. Garfield dryly. "But go on. Your story interests me strangely. Who's the chief walking-delegate of this here executioner's union? Guy named Hope?"

"*Si*," said the general simply. "Hupp is his name."

"And Hope's his nature," said the sheriff.

"I don't understan' your joke," said the Mexican gentleman funereally. Then in Spanish. "Only—I see you are not well, so I will tell you why I come, Mr. Garfield. You don't like lynchings in your district. You are sick, your deputy is away, the sympathy of everybody seems to be with these ranch-owners. Watch carefully!"

"Thanks. Any particular direction?"

The general looked around.

"It might not be healthy were it known I told you but—I evade myself into Mexico, what matter? You know a youth called Wrenchley?"

"Roughly speaking," murmured Mr. Garfield. "Yes."

"Very good. He is not popular, that one. Yesterday, I heard this Hupp speak loudly of Señor Wrenchley's attention to the daughter of my old friend Manoel da Silva. There was to be a shooting of this Wrenchley on sight; and moreover, this Hupp did wear an automatic pistol."

"Automatic pistol, eh? Nasty toys, those."

The general shrugged.

"So! Well, meantime, I do not like to hear a lady's name spoken in gambling-houses. Therefore I invited Señor Hope to step out behind the Temple of Chance and let us try his pistol against my revolver. Well, he merely talked of hanging me. He turned very pale. I think he does not like firearms."

"What's that mean, exactly?"

The general endeavored to insert his epaulettes in his ears.

"You Americans! Always the bluntness, the statement without hair on its head. All right. We are old men; we understand ourselves. Yes? No? Very well, then. We are not to be taken in by much talk—eh? No. All right. Then I think this Hupp has a vendetta against this Wrenchley, but that he feels not like shooting him. I think he likes not the jail, the judge, the trial, the what not. I think instead, he endeavors to get Wrenchley hanged for stealing cattle. That is all. It is finished."

"Oh, no it ain't," said Mr. Garfield.

"It appears so."

"As I told Hope once," said the old man slowly, "things ain't always what they appear. For instance, Hope ain't a gentleman, nor I ain't a wreck, nor this district ain't entirely populated by darn fools nor this frame-up business ain't goin' through on greased skids, even if I am left single-handed against a bunch of roughnecks."

"Suppose they take Wrenchley to hang him—how shall you prevent?"

"That's what I'm goin' to consider about," said Mr. Garfield. "Good afternoon."

And after the general had gone, he paid the subject the compliment of considering it steadily from seven o'clock in the evening until half-past one in the morning.

At which hour, as the sheriff complicated his meditations by an attempt to rise from his chair, the front door of the store opened to admit a blast of cool night-air—and the ragged, alkali-dust-stained form, and incredibly gray, drawn face of Jake Henson.

"Jake!" gasped the old man. "What's——"

Mr. Henson endeavored to smile, but the muscles controlling his lips seemed to be out of commission. He also attempted to look at his chief, but his eyes refused to focus. Having made a wild grab at the doorpost to steady himself, and missed it by a clear foot, he gasped out the words, as he staggered—

"I—saw—Hope——"

—and then, with a crash that shook the whole building, crumpled from the knees full-length, face-downward on the floor, and lay still.

Thirty seconds later, Mr. Garfield, shrieking into the telephone for a connection with Doc Brewer, was informed that somebody was on the line, wanting to speak with himself.

"Well, he can't——"

"Yes, he can," contradicted a man's voice through the receiver. "You're still sheriff, ain't you?"

"Will you get off this line, you——"

"Not till I've told you," said the voice calmly, "that forty head of cattle went missin' off old da Silva's ranch after dark last night."

"Is that all? Well——"

"No, that ain't all," said the voice. "What I called up for was to say that they've just been found, over on young Rensley's place by a scout for this here new ranchers' posse; an' da Silva thinks you'd better come over an' arrest Rensley before Rensley gets hanged from a bough."

The aged mouth, already open to emit further devastating requests for the right of way, closed slowly; then opened again with a snap, only to remain falteringly ajar. Mr. Garfield averted his eyes from the body of his deputy, and rested his forehead against the cold nickelwork of the telephone. He was an old man, and very full of rheumatics, and Jake Henson was dearer to him than several of his own sons; but he was also afflicted by a sense of duty. To this affliction he held himself faithful by sheer force of gripping the receiver, and clenching his few remaining teeth; and in this posture, he thought.

"Who's this speaking?" asked Mr. Garfield hoarsely.

"'Pie-Face' Lammermoor, Bill—of Rising Sun."

"Yes, yes—Pie-Face, if that scout's gone over to Gold Creek after the lynching-bee, they'll be there before I can be. Can you get a posse, and fetch Rensley over to the store here?"

"Why, Bill, I'm afraid all the boys are out with this here ranchers' posse, like, an'——"

"Well——"

"—an' besides," persisted Pie-Face lamentably, "with you in the state you're in, Bill, wouldn't he be safer on his own, like? You ain't in any fit state to protect——"

"Appearances are deceptive," said the sheriff through his teeth. "Now listen to me. Listening?"

"Yup."

"You fetch that boy over here within half an hour. Get me?"

"Y-yes."

"All right then. Do it!"

Having issued which order, and telephoned a very sleepy doctor an imperative command to dress and drive like ——, Mr. Garfield knelt with some difficulty, and raised Jake Henson's head. The deputy's light-gray eyes were three-quarters open; his jaw had dropped; his cropped red head rolled limply to one side.

"Dead!" remarked Mr. Garfield in a whisper.

He was still kneeling by the fallen giant when Doc Brewer drove up twenty minutes later—not praying, as he was careful to explain; just indulging his rheumatism—

And thinking.

BY NIGHT, the illumination of the International Emporium came from a hanging oil-lamp with a vast tin shade; faulty for commercial purposes in that it left the corners of the store in heavy shadow, but valuable pictorially for its tendency to draw together a composition which, left to its own devices, would have scattered lounging over the whole floor-space of the store. Pie-Face Lammermoor had done better than his instructions required; he had ridden up to the store accompanied not only by Rensley, but by a perfect cortège of persons connected with the matter in hand. These persons now formed a compact semi-circle about Mr. Garfield's enthroned position on the store-counter. At one horn of the crescent stood old Manoel da Silva, puzzled and unhappy-looking; at the other, Marcia, his daughter, sat in a rough wooden chair by the stove, her face hidden in the crook of her arm; between

them stood a half-dozen of Rensley's punchers, headed by a tall man with a blue neckcloth and one eye, and backed by a body of vaqueros from da Silva's ranch.

Rensley himself, calm but pale and with a strange fixity of gaze, stood at Mr. Garfield's left hand, and stared at Marcia da Silva. It was to be noticed that, while he spoke of other matters, the sheriff's keen gray eyes traveled continually from the man at his side, to the girl and back again.

"Do I understand," he was asking softly, "that you-all decline to form a posse to protect thisyer young feller from lynchin'?"

"You understand" — began the tall puncher in the blue neckcloth.

"You shut up," snarled Mr. Garfield with sudden fury. "You —— dog, I understand *you*. Pie-Face. What's the idea?"

Mr. Lammermoor leaned funereally over the stove.

"Why, Bill, these vaqueros say they ain't goin' to be shot protectin' any guy that's so obviously guilty as this one; and me, I feel——"

"Who says he's guilty—except this lynchin' gang?"

The one-eyed man opened his mouth.

"You speak to me before I ask you," said the sheriff through his teeth, "and by the Alamo, I'll drive you into the floor like a tenpenny nail. Da Silva—you accusin' him?"

The old Spaniard shrugged.

"I was not," he said. "I wished him well. That is why I called upon you. He was threatened to be shot this afternoon, and——"

"Who by?"

Da Silva hesitated.

"Señor Hope came over to see me. He spoke to me while we were branding the calves——"

"What calves?"

"These that were stolen. They were but branded this afternoon—yesterday afternoon. Señor Hope desired the return of my friendship; and then I was forced to mention—the engagement——"

Out of sight of the punchers, he made a slight gesture connecting his daughter and Rensley. The girl looked up, startled. Mr. Garfield nodded.

"Then Señor Hope threatened to shoot him on sight. So, when news came of this rustling, I thought——"

"You thought he was framed up. Well, what made you change your mind?"

Da Silva shrugged again, and pointed to the man in the blue neckcloth.

"Well?" snapped the sheriff, turning toward this object of his detestation.

"Well?" asked the one-eyed puncher mockingly.

"Tell your tale, an' tell it quick," said the old man. "It's past my bed-time, an' I'm peevish. You play for time a second longer and by——"

"Well," broke in the puncher viciously, "us boys didn't much care to risk our necks alongside our dear kind boss, so we've split on him. He said it was impossible for any man to make off with forty head at night without help, an' called us to say we hadn't helped him. Well, bad luck for him, we said we had!"

"As stool-pigeons for the ranchers' association?" snapped the sheriff.

The one-eyed man grinned as one avoiding an obvious trap.

"No, as poor ——s comin' out of Mexico busted, an' bound to earn our chow the best way that offered."

One of da Silva's vaqueros spat on the floor.

"That gives the case a very bad appearance," said Mr. Garfield slowly.

There was a hoarse chuckle of assent.

"But appearances are deceptive."

"Prove it!" shouted the one-eyed man.

"I will—if I have to," said old Bill Garfield.

He took out his watch.

"I figure we got fifteen minutes before our friends with the rope can get from Gold Creek to Rensley's, an' from Rensley's here. Maybe in that time, the young man can prove it himself. Maybe he's got—an alibi, or somep'n."

For an electric instant, Rensley's eyes flashed into the sheriff's.

"What time do you say the calves was stolen, you?" demanded Mr. Garfield of the one-eyed man.

"Between ten thirty and eleven. An' there's a dozen in the bunk-house can swear they saw us go out."

"I don't doubt it. But maybe there's somebody can swear that at that time—Mr. Rensley here—wasn't with you. Am I right?"

Now the eyes of the young man and the old met fairly, and held like locked blades.

And yet, just in the corner of his field of view, low down amid the swirl of cigaret-smoke and the vague impression of khaki shirts, low-hung gun-belts, and splashes of bright color, Rensley could see the long white hands of Marcia da Silva clasped and extended supplicatingly. Rensley drew a long, cold breath through his teeth; Mr. Garfield breathed out heavily through his nose. There were no eyes in the back of the sheriff's head; but he made the best possible use of those in the front. He had seen the clasped hands, too.

"I've got—no alibi," said Rensley hoarsely.

The vaquero spat again.

"Then," said Mr. Garfield, turning and looking irrelevantly at Marcia da Silva, whose face was again averted, "you can't very well expect these gents here to bet their blood on your innocence. Though I don't suppose you admit your guilt?"

"No," said Rensley slowly. "No, to both."

"You know that leaves you," said Mr. Garfield, still looking at the girl, "under the protection of one old though sprightly sheriff, who wasn't built to fight more'n twenty young men at the same time?"

"Yes."

A high, piping voice from the inner room of the store broke in on the catechism. Simultaneously there protruded past the curtain which blocked that doorway, the aged head of Nathaniel M. Brewer, M. D.

"Two old men, Bill," he protested. "I'm here, ain't I?"

"You get back where you came from," snarled Mr. Garfield.

The head was withdrawn.

"You're accordingly aware," continued the sheriff "that if you can't furnish evidence that'll satisfy these here gents that you're not guilty—you'll most likely be hanged tonight?"

"Yes," said Rensley.

"Well?" snapped Mr. Garfield.

He seemed, almost, to be speaking to Marcia da Silva, instead of to the man at his side. The girl, as if addressed, sprang to her feet.

"Well?" she gasped breathlessly.

For perhaps five seconds, Mr. Garfield stared at her; and then, as she sank back, sobbing weakly, into her chair, the old man shifted his eyes, and appeared to listen.

"Do I—hear—a bunch gallopin' hitherward?" he asked in a whisper.

The one-eyed puncher with the blue neckcloth chuckled.

"You bet your life you do," he said.

"Rensley," snapped the sheriff, "get up-stairs. But first—you're sure about—your not havin' any—alibi evidence?"

Rensley shook his head.

"I'm not goin' up-stairs," he said through his teeth.

A revolver appeared in Mr. Garfield's right hand.

"You be up those stairs inside of ten seconds, or by the Alamo, I'll knock you silly and drag you there," he snarled. "Git. I'm busy."

Rensley stood still.

"You young fool! I'm handling this! And you thank your God I am. Five seconds gone—six—seven—eight——"

"All right."

Scarcely a minute after the door of the stairway had clicked shut behind the prey, a score of ponies came to a halt outside the International Emporium, and the hunters entered. They were not masked. Masks are a nuisance, and in this instance, they would have been entirely useless; it was an eery trick of old Bill Garfield's, to know the lower halves of people's faces quite as well as the upper, and to identify even casual acquaintances indifferently by their voices, their gait, or the way they used their hands. Masked, Marty O'Donnell, who stood by the door with a Winchester ready, would have been instantly recognizable to the sheriff by the mole on the back of his left hand. Casey Hohnbach, of the Gridiron M, would have betrayed his identity by the strange sidewise carriage of his head, caused by a bullet through the neck tendons, back in '84; and Rabbit Roberts would have bulged even a full-length mask by the protrusion of his four front teeth. Since no one was disguised, however, the keen gray eyes under the beetling gray brows were at liberty to ignore details. They flitted over the assembly as a whole; and then they settled on the most salient fact present—John Hope—standing at the head of the lynchers with a rope in his hand. As if to save words, he held it with the hondo forward, and a mere six-inch loop beyond that. And the hondo held thirteen wraps—the hangman's knot.

"Put that gun up, Bill!" cried Marty O'Donnell warningly from the door.

But Bill ignored him entirely.

"Hello, Hope," said the old gentleman quietly. "I'm glad you're here. I've been—wanting to see you."

There was a terrible silence.

It seems impossible, on the face of it, that these mere words from the mouth of a very old man, alone, and comparatively speaking unarmed, should bring to a full stop the breathing of a score of young men, all armed to the teeth, and perfectly reconciled to the idea of knocking their sheriff on the head—not too viciously—if he attempted to interfere with them.

That is because it takes only a moment to make the statement; whereas the fact was the fruit of Mr. Garfield's endeavors during fifty strenuous years. From the mouths of their fathers and grandfathers, and from their own more or less bitter experience, all those present had learned to beware of old Bill Garfield when he spoke quietly; and above all to beware of him when he uttered the formula, "I've been wanting to see you."

Other sheriffs laid violent hands on their victims, or rasped their already sensitive feelings by loud outcries and gloatings; also, other sheriffs lost prisoners, either by force of arms or by wearying of a long chase. Mr. Garfield always remarked that he had cherished a desire to see his quarry; and never once, within the memory of man, had his knotted old hands failed in their clutch.

There was a general shudder.

"Bluffing, eh?" said John W. Hope.

"You think so?" asked Mr. Garfield.

Hope gave a short laugh.

"We ain't here to waste time on words," he said, "but since you ask me the question—yes, I do think you're bluffing."

He swung suddenly on his heel.

"You boys standin' out, aren't you?"

The vaquero who had spat on the floor nodded.

"You betcha," he said.

The one-eyed puncher cleared his throat.

"The guy's up-stairs," he remarked, jerking his thumb.

"Thought you weren't a stool-pigeon," barked Mr. Garfield.

"Never you mind what he is," Hope growled. "We're talkin' about you, old man. We're goin' to see what you *got*. You sit there like a buzzard on a rock, an' some of these boys don't like the look of you. All right. Let's see something. We ain't hidin' our cards. There's nigh on thirty of us here, and all armed. We're sick an' tired of havin' our cattle stolen, an'——"

"Didn't know you had any cattle," observed the sheriff mildly.

"—an' we aim to stop it! Now we've found the jasper that did it, an' he's the same one we suspected all along, and we're not goin' to have him tried at Longhorn City and sent up for six months or something. We're goin' to stop his clock for good. He's goin' to hang! Now, then. There's your situation. You're one, lone, lorn bald-headed coot against the whole of us. Come on. What you goin' to do that's so big?"

"You don't like me, do you?" said Mr. Garfield.

Hope gave a short laugh.

"You're dead right," he replied.

"Why not?"

The volunteer hangman raised his sinister rope and pointed its loop full in the old man's face.

"Playin' for time while he slides out of the window up-stairs, are you?" he crowed. "Why, you old fool, there's another dozen men outside waiting for him! And since you ask me, I'll tell you why I don't like you; I'll tell these boys; you know it already. While you were being very pally with this cow-thief, you were accusing me of smuggling Chinese across the border—accusing me to da Silva there, and his daughter, and setting your —— deputy to dog me around."

"Oh, you saw him, did you?"

"You bet your life I saw him," sneered Hope. "And now——"

He took one step forward—in which the lowering crowd behind him did not join. Three Pines Valley did not breed cowards; or if it did, they were of few days and full of trouble; they remained not long in that place. But the punchers there present knew Mr. Garfield; they saw he had a gun in his hand, and they knew that, odds or no odds, he would go down fighting. He would have one shot, or at most two, before he could be overpowered; and with a natural diffidence, each several member of the crowd preferred that somebody else should take the lead.

"You raise that gun," grated Hope, "and——"

"And—what? You'll shoot me?"

"You've said it."

"With your celebrated automatic pistol, no doubt?"

"Yes." It was an infuriated bellow.

From behind, Rabbit Roberts' hand fell on Hope's elbow.

"Watch out!" Roberts whispered. "For God's sake, watch out. He's gettin' ready——"

"Watch?" roared Hope. "What should I watch for? Has the old fake got you buffaloed as far as that? I've dared him to do his stuff. I ain't goin' to waste any more time. Up and at him! He's upstairs!"

Slowly, and with his eyes on the crowd, Mr. William Garfield eased himself off the counter, and stumped over to the stairway door. He planted himself with his back to it, shoved his gun back into its holster, and faced the crowd, supporting himself with a hand twisted into the fringe of the curtain through which Doc Brewer had poked his head. The back room covered by that curtain was rather well known to most of those present. It was used indifferently as a dining-room for guests of honor at the Three Pines Store, and as a morgue.

"Boys," said the sheriff slowly.

And the crowd listened to him. There was something in his voice which checked even Hope. The lynching-party stood under the hanging lamp like a dragon halted in the moment of spring, the standard cockatrice expression in its numerous eyes, and exuding short, excited puffs of tobacco smoke at two dozen points, instead of the conventional fire and brimstone.

"You-all knew Jake Henson. You ain't much for the law tonight, but—I guess you'll be just to Jake."

Mr. Garfield's voice trembled, and he played around rather fumblingly with his chin. Marty O'Donnell, at the door, felt a sudden prickling of the vestigial hair on his spine. An impressionable youth from the other side of Prairie Dog shivered violently.

"Now I want you to take note of what this hangman," continued the sheriff, "said about why he didn't like me. I accused him of shippin' Chinamen over the border in the dead of night. He said Jake had been doggin' him. He also said that if I, an officer of the law, tried to stop him in an illegal act, he would shoot me—with an automatic pistol. Did he, or did he not?"

From the crowd behind Hope came no sound of assent; but the air shuddered with a hissing of indrawn breath, multiplied a score of times. Rabbit Roberts, his eyes fixed hypnotically on the old man at the curtain, stepped back a pace from Hope's side. At the hangman's other hand, "Two-Toes" Trotter moved so as to lean on the counter. Imperceptibly, Hope was left standing alone.

"Are those his words?" shouted Mr. Garfield suddenly.

Then, without waiting for a reply, he threw back the curtain, its rings rattling on the pole.

On the table of the back room, in full view of Hope and of the staring crowd behind him, lay the body of Jake Henson, the hands folded on the breast; a bandage holding up the jaw, and two candles, in battered tin sticks, flickering eerily to right and left of the head.

The vaquero who had spat on the floor, dropped to his knees heavily and began to pray. Marcia da Silva, rising to her feet, turned a white, terrified face toward Hope, and then, with a faint scream, flung her arms around the neck of her father. From the crowd behind Hope came a low growl, interrupted as it swelled toward menacing fury by a panic-stricken cry from Hope.

"It's a lie!" he shouted hoarsely, swinging around toward his supporters. "I didn't kill him! I didn't kill him!"

"Where were you at ten-thirty tonight?" came the icy voice of old Bill Garfield from behind him.

Swinging on his heel again, Hope faced the old man.

"I—I—" he began, stammered, and then stopped.

"Stand back!" yelled the sheriff, drawing his gun again.

He was looking, not at Hope, but past him; and as that much-notched gun swung to the horizontal, the rush that had started, led by Marty O'Donnell, stopped dead.

"This man," said old Bill Garfield, "ain't goin' to be handed lynch law. *I'm* handling this party. Before he's even arrested, he's goin' to have a chance to prove any defense he can. Not that he's accused by me. All the accusin', he's done himself."

The crowd laughed grimly.

"Where were you at ten-thirty tonight, Hope?"

"I——"

"You've said that much before. Now, were you, or were you not, runnin' a bunch of chinks across the river? Answer!"

"No!"

"You lie! Where were you then?"

A terrible silence.

"Have you any witnesses as to where you were, if not there? You're havin' your chance, Hope. Once I lay my hand on your shoulder, you're goin' to have a lot to explain. It looks bad, Hope. Now, for the last time, can you prove you weren't on the banks of the Rio Grande at ten-thirty——"

"Yes!"

"Where were you, then?"

Trembling, the sweat rolling in great beads down his ashen face, Hope hesitated again; and suddenly, quick as the explosion of fine-grained powder, a roar of rage arose from the men at whose head he had placed himself.

"Stand back," bellowed Bill Garfield; and, to emphasize his words, fired two quick shots through the floor at the feet of the surging front rank.

"Give him to us! Give him to us, the murdering hound. Give us the rope. The rope! The rope!"

In the midst of which, the stairway door opened, and young Rensley appeared.

"All right," he addressed the instantly quieted mob calmly. "Take me, then. It'll be all right, Mr. Garfield."

Normally, the words, and the action they signified, would have commanded attention. Now they were utterly ignored. Mr. Garfield heard them, and by a subconscious process stored them away in his capacious memory; but he did not remove his eyes from the face of Hope.

"Hope," he said very slowly, "I'm going to give you one more chance—or five more chances. I'm going to count five; and if you ain't thought up your alibi by the end, blame yourself, not me, for what happens. Where were you at ten-thirty? One——

"Two.

"Three.

"Four.

"Five!"

Hope turned toward the one-eyed puncher with the blue neckcloth; and, at the sight of that worthy's stony stare, hesitated again. And instantly, Mr. William Garfield's clawlike hand settled on his shoulder.

"John Hope," said the aged voice unemotionally, "I arrest you for the wilful——"

The words were enough. Blubbering, gasping, like a heap of old clothes enclosing jelly, John W. Hope sank to his knees.

"I was with that guy," he gasped, pointing to the puncher with the one eye. "I was with him, and those other men of Rensley's."

"Where?"

"At da Silva's ranch—rus—rustling—rustling the calves to pl-plant them on Rensley. Oh my God! You don't believe me. I was! They were with me! Make them swear to it! I got them over from Mexico, and sent them to Rensley so we could frame him. I can prove it! I can prove it! They were running the Mexican end of the Chinese business—I can prove it all! For God's sake——"

Rabbit Roberts put his foot against Hope's back and shoved the wretched man over face downward on the floor. He groveled.

"You're quite sure of all this?" Mr. Garfield asked silkily.

Then, looking sharply at the puncher with one eye, he snapped another question:

"You, over there! What do you say about it?"

The puncher surveyed the roomful of men, glanced at his partners in iniquity, and shrugged.

"That's right," he said coolly. Then, through his teeth, "We thought—*that*—was a man."

"So did I!" cried Marcia da Silva.

She tore away from her father's restraining grasp, and stood over her prostrate lover, facing the crowd furiously.

"I thought he was a man—he said he would kill Rensley and I—was afraid—for him. Not for Rensley. And I risked my reputation, sneaking from my father's house, and going to beg Rensley to leave the country so that—this—should not be in trouble. I was in Rensley's house at half-past ten. I was there alone; I made him swear he would never tell that I had been there. When he was in danger, I tried to make myself tell, for he would not. He would have been hanged rather than break his word. And now I have told—too late."

She swung on her heel and looked full at Rensley. Very, very slightly, he nodded. It was too late.

"Yes, appearances," said Mr. Garfield gently, "are deceptive. Well, you-all heard this guy, and these others, confess himself and theirselfs guilty of smugglin' Chinese, and framin' Rensley here up on this rustling business?"

"Yes, and of murder too!" said Two Toes Trotter savagely.

"No, no!" moaned the man at their feet.

"*I* never accused him of murder," said Mr. Garfield. "Appearances are so deceptive. This particular appearance fooled me—for a minute. And it seems to have fooled you, too. Take off the bandage, Doc."

Brewer slipped the strip of linen from over Jake Henson's head; and, with a sickening limpness, the jaw dropped. For a moment, it looked like the wilful adding of horror to horror; and then a strange sound vibrated the air. Nay, more, it vibrated the floor; vibrated the ceiling, made the very windows shake.

A wild, hysterical roar of laughter went up. The crowd dissolved into a babel of words. Hope, raised from the floor by rough hands, was handcuffed and secured to the sound of a broadside of chaff; the punchers who had been so willing to betray Rensley, were roughly tied with ropes and hurried out, amid mockery, to the railroad tool-shed which served Three Pines as a lock-up. A dozen men around Rensley shook his hand to the accompaniment of uproarious guffaws.

Through all of which uproar, the strange, vibrating sound cut regularly and monotonously.

In other words, Jake Henson, his mouth open again, snored on and on and on.

"Try—doggin' somebody—f'r a week—yourself," murmured Mr. Garfield to an unheeding world, "an' see how tired you—get."

The old gentleman leaned back against the wall, and, over the bobbing heads of the rejoicing crowd, surveyed his aged non-cuckoo clock. It was three in the morning; and a steely light was beginning to seep in through the eastward windows, throwing a dead, pale light on Jake's face. Mr. Garfield shivered.

" 'Pearances," he said brightly to the world at large, "v'ry 'cepti.' "

It was not until five minutes after that, that any one was at liberty to give old Bill any admiring attention; and it might easily have been twenty, so ungrateful is the world, had not every ear been made conscious suddenly that another strange sound was fighting for possession of the smoky, kerosene-tainted atmosphere.

And when attention was focused on the old gentleman, it was found, like so many other things, to have come too late.

His back against the wall, between the stairway door he had defended and the curtain opening that had been his principal weapon; his revolver still in his hand, his head bowed forward and to one side, his venerable mouth open and emitting snores in a rather more treble and penetrating key than those of his deputy, Mr. William Garfield slept.

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

HOW Raymond S. Spears met the hero of his story in this issue.

He came to our camp, as described in the story, and just hog-wallowed into our breakfast. We didn't run. We just made war on the brute. I found a pine-knot four feet long, and whaled him on the neck. He walked away, cross-stepping his legs. And so, having long been witness to hogs, from Iowa to East Tennessee, I tried to do the mountain razorback justice.—SPEARS.

DURING the first two or three months of this year there were seven cases of flu on the staff, one of ptomaine and one minor hospital operation. I mention this because, as a natural result, office work suffered severely, many a letter went weeks unanswered and there was sad delay in passing on manuscripts. We explained at the time in a good many cases but there wasn't much time for explanations and apologies. Any of you who ought to have had 'em and didn't, please accept them now.

WHO doesn't envy him his cruise? Dale Collins tells us something about himself on the occasion of his first story in the magazine.

Modesty's a good quality about any camp-fire, but I can't help making a claim to be regarded as one of the world's lucky ones. The impossible has a kindly way of happening to me, and adventure has not only come when least expected but also in profitable guise.

THE sea and I have been friends since I was kid, though I am—and always will be—one of the worst sailors in the world. That, of course, is not the sea's fault, and there's no falling off in my

esteem. The idea for "The Rat-Trap" came when I was down in just such a hold as Dave Davis was trapped in. There were the same rats, also, but they scurried away from us because we had the good fortune not to be pinned down. But they were fierce, savage-eyed little beasts with keen teeth.

About that luck, however. I'm an Australian, and was on a Melbourne newspaper when the biggest consignment was delivered. Went into the office like a respectable citizen one bright morning and the editor threw across a wire.

"Care to go round the world on a yacht?" he asked.

I'd read about the American motor-yacht *Speejacks* enviously. She'd just arrived in Sydney and the papers had been full of her. The room spun round three times, and I heard the boss explaining that A. Y. Gowen, owner of *Speejacks*, wanted a man to write the story of the trip and was after me. The decision had been arrived at hastily and the yacht was about to sail. Could I be aboard on the following day all ready to leave? Could I? I should say so!

I HAD eight hours in which to settle all my worldly affairs and make my train. There was no time wasted. Passports, farewells, business and a thousand other things were jammed into that busiest and brightest day. But I was one of the *Speejacks* when she churned out to months of cruising through Pacific isles and Orient, along uncharted coasts of New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, beneath the ardent tropic sun. Cannibal drums made music, the sea held us close in her arms, every dawn brought new scenes and new wonders. It was a fairy-tale come true.

The late Lord Northcliffe I had met while he was in Australia, and he knew my work. More good-luck! A cable to him brought a commission to write the yarn for *The Daily Mail* with much profit to pocket. They took thirty articles and displayed them well, which was a valuable introduction to this foggy city. Sitting here in a prosaic flat in the heart of London, it's hard to imagine that the months aboard the *Speejacks*—poking cheerfully into strange harbors about the seas—are not a dream. I find them hard to believe, so hard that I'll be glad when Doubleday, Page in your country and Heinemann's here get out "Sea-Tracks of the *Speejacks*" in which I have set down all our doings. It will be good to have that happy record of happy adventure.

I could give you other samples of luck, but I've just mentioned this one because if such an adventure could chance to me out of a humdrum sky—if there can be such a thing—there's hope for all of us, hope for all the "dreamers dreaming greatly in the man-stifled town." More luck awaits me to-morrow, may you be able to say the same!—DALE COLLINS.

A GOOD word for Calamity Jane from an old-timer of the West:

Portland, Oregon.

This is sent on the chance that Camp-Fire members may be interested in some first-hand information anent that notorious character, Calamity Jane.

So far as I know, she was not the ——roaring tough some writers have pictured her, and did not go about loaded down with two heavy six-shooters, especially while in town. I was in and about Deadwood during the boom days of '77-8 and 9 and saw her many times. She was never armed, except while accompanying some troop of cavalry on their scouts against the Sioux. Upon such occasions it was hard to tell her from a man for she was mounted, garbed and equipped exactly as were the troopers.

As to her morals, the less said about them the better, for the poor derelict has long since gone to her reward. But bad though she undoubtedly was, she possessed redeeming traits which may count for her in the final reckoning. So far as I know, she had no enemies among the miners, and I have heard many a one of them say she had a heart as big as the pumping engine of an ox, men whom she had staked or nursed through a spell of mountain fever.

So here's to Calamity Jane—and may she rest in peace along with Wild Bill and other famous characters of those strenuous days.—W. R. WHEELER.

SOMETHING about a famous old character of the South Seas. J. Allan Dunn tells it in connection with his story in this issue.

There were a lot of things attributed to Bully Hayes that he never committed, as happens with every successful rascal. Becke knew him and wrote some of them. He had vanished from the South Seas when I first went there, thirty years ago, and heard many of the yarns about him. I think I know how he finished up—but that is another story.

BUT, in the files of the Sydney *Morning Herald* for the year 1879, it is related how Wong Foo, pearler of Piri, fooled Bully Hayes as I have set it down. Hayes left the island, says the *Herald*, "swearing that all Chinamen were the devil." Later, he learned how he had been tricked. Wong Foo did not seem to fear Hayes' threat of skinning him alive and Hayes never found where Wong Foo settled down with his wives, his poetry-making and his books of philosophy. Doubtless Wong Foo kept pigeons to the end of his days. He may have brought the flock back from Piri. But the tale is true.

It may be noted that Wong Foo spoke the literal truth when he said there were no pearls *on* the island. Perhaps to lie direct was against the tenets of his philosophy.—J. A. D.

ANOTHER of the 1920 vintage from our cache. Only trouble with this letter is that he didn't let his pen run on longer:

Phœnix, Arizona.

An extended trip into the White Mountains (motor and pack train) has delayed the writing of this letter. But late as it is I trust the subject matter will still be of interest.

THE story of De Vacca's trip across the continent was of particular interest to those who know the Southwest and realize the extent and romance of its early history during the days of the Spanish explorers. Few realize the importance of the early history of Arizona and New Mexico and its relation to the development of the United States. As a single instance, it is safe to say that, aside from students of American history, there are not many who associate the founding of San Francisco with

Arizona history. Yet, de Anza's expedition started from Tubac, a mission, situated about 40 miles south of Tucson. This expedition was ordered to found a colony on San Francisco Bay and, after a hazardous trip overland, established the first settlement there at a point within the bounds of the present Presidio.

To return to de Vacca and his party, the negro Estevan did not die in Mexico. He was killed near one of the pueblos of New Mexico. His death forms an interesting chapter of early American history.

ESTEVAN accompanied Fray Marcos in one of his journeys north through Arizona in search of the long-sought "Cities of Cibola" of fabled wealth. Reaching the land of the Pinnas, Fray Marcos sent Estevan ahead evidently as a scout and to prepare the way for his own coming. Estevan was to wait for Fray Marcos, but finding that the Indians hailed him as a god, Estevan decided to "go on his own." His journey north became a triumphal procession. Estevan was received by the tribes with presents, feasted, made a royal guest and granted escorts of honor. In this way he penetrated north on to the Painted Desert, visiting the Hopi country, and making himself at home among the tribes. He must have been an arrogant rascal. At least the honors accorded him turned his head, he became unreasonable in his demands upon the Indians and finally, at one of the Pueblos in New Mexico, he was refused admittance to the town and stoned to death. In the words of McClintock the historian, "He demanded women and they stoned him to death."

The cairn of stones said to cover his body still stands and is pointed out by the natives as the spot where a black and evil spirit who came among them was killed. I regret to state that the name of the village has slipped my memory, however, any one interested can find it by referring to McClintock's history of Arizona. Incidentally his history is interesting reading to one fond of adventure. It is not a dry recital of facts but a narrative by a man who loved his subject.

ENOUGH—but before I close, I must return for a moment to the pueblo dwellers of Arizona and New Mexico. One can not say that they have "seen America" until they have penetrated the Painted Desert and visited the ancient villages, whose streets knew the martial tread of Coronado's armed retainers and the leather-sandaled footsteps of Fray Marcos. And these, long before the Pilgrims set foot in New England.

The subject is one that coaxes the pen to continue, but I shall respect your time and space.—N. M. McKinley.

BANFF'S big ten-day Winter Carnival ended two days ago from this writing on March 7th. The flu made me miss it, for the Carnival Committee honored our magazine by asking its editor to be present as a guest and his inability to do so is just now a particularly sore point with him.

Ten days of ski, snowshoe, swimming, skating, hockey, curling, packing, and trap-shooting contests climaxing in the hundred-mile dog-team race—"the first all-visible Dog Derby"—for the "Strongheart" Trophy and $2,500 cash, not to mention sports and amusements on the side. I call it hard luck to miss it, but I'm glad Banff wanted our magazine represented at this carnival of northern outdoor matters that figure so prominently in many of our stories and in which all of us have considerable interest.

A WOMAN member of our writers' brigade rises to introduce herself on the occasion of her first story in the magazine:

I was born in British Columbia not far from the city of Vancouver. My parents were pioneers of that country, my father having been one of the early gold-seekers of old Cariboo. He was well read and an entertaining conversationalist. Naturally as children we heard many stories of his early experiences, stories that fostered in me a love of adventure and threw over the far north the glamour of romance. I was also a great reader, particularly of books of fiction.

WHEN in after years, armed with a teacher's certificate, I secured a school on the Cariboo Road, I went with much interest and curiosity. One hundred and fifty miles by stage left me in a scattered stock-raising country, primitive and lonely. There I met trappers, cowboys, freighters, miners, the "remittance man," and the many other types that gravitate naturally to isolated regions. I knew what it was to see nothing but the great white stretch of snow, to hear the night silence broken only by the screech of the coyote. I was privileged to hear cases tried by a justice of the peace, even the first trial of an Indian for murder. I had already begun to scribble, but, like most young writers, did not dream of utilizing the material at hand.

MY SECOND school was in a mining-town of the Kootenays, a typical camp with its one long street, saloons, gambling-dens, and mixed population. There I became interested in socialism, the war between Labor and Capital, and other problems of the masses.

Restless by nature, I wearied of teaching and found my way East. I have done social work in large cities, have become familiar with the interior of prisons, asylums, and other places of refuge for unfortunates sick in mind and body. From this I have learned much of human nature, but above all I have learned to appreciate more fully the sweetness and freedom of the great out-of-doors. I have traveled America, East, West, North and South, but by birth, heritage, and in spirit am still a Westerner.

WHILE studying at Columbia University, New York, through the advice of one of my teachers in English, I again began to write. To many readers the term "Western story" suggests the stereotyped blood and thunder yarn. There are corners of the West and North where life is as primitive as it was a half century ago, where men

wash gold in the frying-pan, where live and die characters as quaintly interesting as were the Forty-niners immortalized by Bret Harte.

In my story "Black Danger," Pete, Joe, Lord Penny, the horse, even the race came to me, shadowy reminiscences of other days. My ambition? To return to the North West, to write of life as I know it, to finish a novel I have begun staged upon years of observation and study.—MARY SHANNON.

HERE'S a pleasant little letter. No, my friend, unless I'm badly mixed it's not the Slavs we choose for the bad men of our stories, but the Swedes except that it's the Germans except that it's the Mexicans, except that it's a whole long list of other races. At least so others like yourself—though of these other races—have told us. So far as I remember you're the first who's accused us of having it in for the Slavs.

I wonder what gave you the idea that any magazine picks out any particular race to be the villains in its stories. If you leap from such insufficient and carelessly considered data to such unsound and mistaken conclusions in other matters as you do in this one, I imagine the opinion you express of this country isn't a particularly valuable one.

Galveston, Texas.

Have your "bad men" made in U. S. A. While spending few weeks in Galveston on vacation, I have read several of your magazines, *Adventure*, which I picked up on the hotel book-shelf at random, and I have noticed that in most of the stories you publish you pick some foreigner for your "bad man"—that is, where the "bad man" is exceptionally bad. The various branches of the Slavic race have been "picked on" with such regularity that the writer began to wonder if it was accidental, or was it the policy of your magazine to convey the idea to your readers that all Slavs are "bad men."

Your early education may have been of such nature that it seems quite natural for you, and your staff of writers, to pick some foreigner for your "bad man." Most of the publishers in Germany did the same thing, though they refused to admit it; and when the war came along, they wondered why all their neighbors were against them.

If there was an actual shortage of "bad men"—real, home-made *hombres*—there might be some excuse for your policy. But a country where money has the power of the gods, a country where slavery was legal up to 60 years ago, a country whose citizens can "enjoy" the sight of a man being roasted alive, that country has all the bad men they need—and then some.—IVANTISEK TOJTU.

Mr. Tojtu, if you have such a poor opinion of this country, why do you stay in it? Are you merely living off it—getting what you can out of it for yourself, enjoying its privileges and opportunities, while you abuse it? Over here that's what we call being a poor sport. At least I hope you're no worse than that and are not of those foreigners who come here for no purpose in the world except to make trouble in the country that receives you. I don't blame foreigners for seeing bad things in this country. There are plenty of bad things here—as in other countries. But if bad things are all you can see here and if you're more interested in standing up for the Slavs rather than for Americans, why in —— don't you get out of our country and go back to Russia or wherever you came from? If you want to be one of us and help set bad things right by American methods and according to American standards you are welcome. If not, get out.

WE CAN forget this particular foreigner, but a large proportion of the foreigners who come to this country need to have a certain point made very clear to them. We have for generations opened the door of our national house not only to the oppressed but to almost any one who wishes to come to live with us. The privilege of American citizenship is theirs practically for the asking, and in giving it to them we give them the equal chance with us at the fruits of what our forefathers worked and bled to create—fruits to whose producing these foreigners have contributed not one solitary thing. We open our house to them very generously. *But, by ——, we do not give them the house!*

It is still *our* house. We offer them the chance to live in it. If they do not like the house, they need not come. If they come it is up to them—as it is up to any decent man accepting hospitality—to adapt themselves to the customs of that house, not to abuse it or to try to tear it down and build a house to suit themselves in its place.

WE HAVEN'T given America to the Slavs or the Germans or the English or the Italians, Hungarians, Greeks, Irish or any other foreigners. America belongs to Americans. If you wish to become an American, become one, but that means ceasing to be anything else and fitting yourself into the American methods and standards. It does *not* mean coming over here and trying to make America into Russia, England, Ireland, Germany, Italy or any other foreign country. If you like these other countries better why in God's name

don't you stay in them or go back to them? If you like America better it's because America is different, because it *is* America, so why in God's name aren't you content to leave it that way instead of trying to make it like the countries you don't like so well?

We've been a generous people. And a tolerant, patient, careless people. So that not only has our generosity been forgotten and imposed upon but many of those who have accepted our generosity are now busily engaged in trying to elbow us out of our own house. A hog from the sty could be no more lacking in appreciation or fairness or common decency.

We've been a patient people, but can't you read the signs that our patience has been strained almost to the breaking-point? Hasn't it ever occurred to you that even patient people will stand for being elbowed only up to a certain point and that after that point is passed—well, when American patience has been overstrained in the past the fellow who overstrained it has generally had what might be called the surprize of his life.

BY the last census there are only a little more than fifty-five per cent. of our population who are of white American parentage, but thank God there are among those with one American parent, among those of no American parents and among those of black parentage many who do know what fairness and gratitude are and what America and Americanism are, who are just as good Americans as any one else and will be as strong and earnest as any one else if it comes to demonstrating that America still belongs to Americans.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, H. F. Gaiser rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in the magazine.

I have been a reader of the *Adventure* for a number of years and have always wanted to move up and join the circle but have always hesitated. My hearing is very good and no word was ever dropped at Camp-Fire without my hearing it from the shadows.

FOR myself I haven't much to tell, but here goes. Born in Buckeye, Indiana, in 1888, raised in the cow and horse business until I was seventeen, ran away and joined the Army, assigned to the Fourth Cavalry at Walla Walla, Washington, went to the Islands with them, discharged at Ft. Mead, S. D. Knocked about the country for a bit, broke a few broncs and went broke, reenlisted in the recruiting service, discharged in Pittsburgh, Pa. Joined the police department, mounted, got a leave of absence in 1917 and went back into the Army looking for a gent with a name almost my own, intending to knock the "K" from his name. Soldiered as a buck—those were the happy days—later was made corporal, sergeant, first sergeant, second lieutenant, first lieutenant and captain. If that isn't enough trouble for one man I'll eat your hat. Couldn't catch the gent I was looking for so I returned to the police job. Have been sergeant for the past three years—more trouble—where I expect to remain.

About the story, everything is fiction except the *nipa*-shack fight, which was a fact. I know of no *Sergeant Thomas* but possibly a certain old-time Fourth cavalryman, if he happens to see the story, will drop me a line and tell me that the editor misspelled the name of *Nuber*.—H. F. GAISER.

SOMETHING from Dr. W. C. Robertson of Honduras on tarantulas and such. Also on Latin-Americans:

Galeras, Olancho, Honduras.

Re the tarantula and the scorpion: Mr. Raymond Thorpe is right. The tales told about those insects are—just traveler's tales. Our fellow man is mostly a scare-cat and liable to swallow any old tale told of a reptile or a spider. The tarantula bites: That is fact. But that the bite is fatal is—bunk. It is not even worth fussing about.

Any banana plantation hand can tell you more about the T. than all the scientists put together. He meets the gent quite often in his business and gets bit once in a while, but I have yet to hear of one who looks for anything stronger than gin or aguardiente as a remedy. Furthermore, the remedy is often worse than the disease.

AS FOR the scorpion, he is totally overrated. He is a hot member, all right, but nothing at all like he is said to be. If you want to know the real inside medicine about the S. you ought to call on some one who is, or has been, a sawyer in the southern part of Florida to stand up in meetin' and speak his little piece. I doubt if there is ever a pine log hauled into a mill that does not carry at least one S. and many of them have a half a dozen. That being the case, you can imagine what chance the sawyer has of escaping. He has none. There is hardly a day that he does not get swiped by one or more. He soon becomes practically immune, or at least mentally immune. Which is to say he loses all fear and just cusses a line or two, then keeps on sawing. He wears his pants inside of his sox as a rule and keeps a long eye out for those that swarm up on the outside.

We have a far worse S. here than the Florida chap. This fellow is much larger and is a dark brown color shading almost to black. He makes you hop when he hits you, and his sting is equal to about four good wasp stings. Some people have the tongue affected, much as it is by a heavy dose of aconite, but that passes off speedily, and all is well. When I get hit, I use a little ammonia and forget it. I'd sooner have a S. bite me than a good, busy bumblebee. We who live among these insects never give them a thought, and it is to laugh when we see the bunk the average hiker writes around them.

WE HAVE an ant or pismire here that can double discount the S., or the T. for the matter of that. He is locally called *bala*—which means ball, and one might as well have a ball shot into him as be stung by one of those interesting chappies. Within a half an hour the stingee has a high fever, and the pain of the sting lasts for three or four days, not disappearing entirely for a full week. The *bala* is about two inches long, sometimes a fraction more, and he makes his community nest in rotten wood, preferably a hollow tree or a standing stump.

Down on the Patuca I got hit by three of them at once and I'd prefer almost anything else in the shape of pain. It was the real article, believe me, for a few hours. I was doing some leveling and had to stick it till evening, but I had a high fever and was glad to take to the river on the way back to camp. That was a dandy cure though. About three miles of river to swim and float, sometimes dragging myself over the shallows, but when I reached camp the fever was gone and I was ready for a big supper. The scorpion is not in it with the *bala*. I'd cheerfully take twenty scorpions at their best instead of one *bala*.

Of course there are folk who will take exception to what I say, but they are the folk who only *think* they know. They don't! We, who have these cheerful buddies with us always, know!

AS THORP says, the centipede is the lad to look out for. He is bad medicine, and his trail is difficult to heal. Another matter is that the place he inspissates with his venom displays a tendency to recur. Apparently cured and often forgotten, it breaks out anew and is more rebellious the second time than the first. This is not a law at all, but is of frequent occurrence.

RE THE tarantula's suicide: Any of that brand that appears where I am commits suicide. Bank on that.

There are a lot of folk of years enough to know better who still hold on to the silly ideas they imbibed when in the formative state, popular credences which one takes in through the pores, not through the medium of gray matter. In one's salad days one lives in an atmosphere local to one's habitat and naturally one becomes permeated with it and accepts without dispute or reason all that it bears. Most of us never get rid of that effect and will pull off our jackets and fight fiercely should any one dispute the things we learned when green, or the reliability of the atmosphere from which we soaked our wisdom. We accept things simply because—and that because may have neither rime nor reason, most often has neither. We were brought up to those credences, therefore they are so. The greatest talent man can have is the ability to accept correction, to admit himself fallible. It is also the rarest. It passes me why this should be so. Man ought to desire the truth above all things. If I am in error, surely I ought to be grateful to any one who shows me that error? Not at all. I hate to be found out, and so the person who shows me up becomes my enemy. He really is my best friend, if I had only sense enough to know it.

A NASTY little pride of personality—egotism *in excelcis*—is at the bottom of all this, and is responsible for the most of the dense ignorance of the day. People don't want to learn. Why? Because to learn they have to admit themselves ignorant. And yet the knowledge of all the savants, of all the wise men of all times, is as a grain of mustard seed compared to the immensity of what is yet to be learned. To admit ignorance is simply to say "I am human." The basic end of argument ought to be the search for truth, but alas, we argue not to seek truth but to bolster up our own belief. We do not care a —— whether it be true or not—it is ours. Until the day comes when men will thank one another for correction, ignorance will hold the fort.

If I think a scorpion's bite is deadly, I would thank no one to set me right. Really, why bother to set such folk right? They are not worth the effort. Any man who is so set in his own ideas that he is prepared to get hot when another disputes him, is one whose opinion is worthless, for or against. However the matter of the S. or the T. is not a matter of opinion at all, but one of fact. The only persons whose say-so is valuable in such cases are those who have first—the opportunity, and second—the ability to judge facts as presented. There are persons whose mental bias is so great that all they see becomes tinctured. Their point of sight is such that they cannot see straight. Here is a case in point:

ONE of my employees was bitten by a scorpion—a small one at that—and he was one of those who had been brought up to imagine the bite fatal. I was called at once, and, when I arrived and found out what I had been called for, I naturally got hot under the collar. I was bossing a high and difficult trestle, and my men had to await my return. I said a few things, dashed a little ammonia on the bite, and fumed off back to my affairs. The employee was present at supper-time to do his customary justice to the food.

A month or so later I had the pleasure of seeing the incident made the base of a blatant diatribe on the brutality and inhumanity of the genus Typical Tropical Tramp, especially when elevated to a temporary and ephemeral authority. Gee! It was a peach of an article. A spectator of my treatment of the employee, another of the same breed, had hurried off to spread himself on paper, horrified by the inhumanity of man to man. He never thought it worth his while to wait and see. Nothing like that. He had seen an awful example of brutality and his DUTY called him. Wouldn't that make you sick? Suppose they called you off when you were bedding down the mag. to put sticking plaster on a pin prick in the elevator boy's thumb, what would you be likely to say and do?

No native would have wasted my time in such a manner. Only a —— fool white man could have been guilty of such idiocy, yet they pride themselves on their superiority. Gosh!

AND that brings me to what Perry had to say about the Latin-American.

Perry is quite right. The Latin-American is all he says of him and then some. Compared with the same number taken anywhere out of our countries, the quality of this bunch is far in advance. They all poke fun at the brownies, as they call them, but the brownie nine times out of ten is infinitely their superior. In hospitality, honor, honesty and common decency, they are very much better than the

shyster writers who impugn them. Judge for yourself. I shall take one case alone:

We will imagine two superintendents, one here, one in the States, each with five hundred employees. They are at a distance of one hundred miles from supplies, and money is needed on a certain day to pay off the hands. The superintendent here calls one of his mozos, *any of them*, and gives him a letter to So-and-So at the supply center, who will, on receipt of it, turn over to the man a thousand dollars—or ten if needed. This the mozo will bring at express speed and deliver and nobody will even notice what has been done. Now what will the States man do? Can he take any of his men and duplicate the act? Not any man regardless, as the other does, but any special man? There you have it all. No need to say another word. The man who can not take that and reason out the rest for himself is a man who does not wish to.

"But they are poor and ignorant!" Quite so! Thank God for it, too, if the contrary is the cause of the other lack. Which is best—the lack of honesty and honor, or the lack of money and information?

But those who think they are better than the Latin would think so in any case, and their opinion does not matter at all. The Latin does not bother his fash what they think of him, indeed does not even know they exist, and cares less. Which is just as it ought to be.—W. C. ROBERTSON.

ON THE occasion of his first story in our magazine Anthony M. Rud follows Camp-Fire custom and rises to introduce himself:

Citronelle, Alabama.

I'm delighted, especially on this coldest day of the Winter, to accept your invitation. Toast my shins at the Camp-Fire? You bet! I've just finished putting more tarps and ancient quilts over the grapefruit, oranges, lemons and cumquats; and both the warmth and good fellowship will hit the right spot.

Members of your merry circle are admitting a new chum whose general contours, characteristics and likings are as follows:

Height, six feet two. Weight, 210. Age, 30. Married, and claiming a half interest in two daughters and one son. Disposition usually gentle, save when watching the meanderings of a flubbed putt. In the words of Cotton Mather (?)

> "They call me rough
> And they call me wild—
> But I never harmed a chicken
> Or a child!"

Grad of Dartmouth, p. g. student at U. of C. and Rush Medical—not an M. D., however. Worked for Sears Roebuck, the C. & N. W. Railroad, and then spent two years sub-editing on *Illustrated World*, Chicago. Free-lanced articles then, shifting gradually into fiction when friend Ray Long discovered pay-streak symptoms in hitherto unpromising ore.

Adventures? Well, none of especially hair-raising nature. I've been lost twice—once north of the Saskatchewan, and once in the piney-woods of Washington County, Alabama. I stumbled (by accident, I assure you!) over a berry-eating black bear one pitch-dark night at Lake Lakelse, B. C. The bear didn't have to *woof* twice, as my largest weapon in hand at the time was a single-barrelled cigarette of the brand which is alleged to satisfy. I've had three rather strenuous disputes with Cajans while wandering about the woods in this district; the difficulties all arose because for a long time I possessed an insatiable curiosity. Smell of cooking shinny mash is a dangerous aroma to search down to its source, however. I don't recommend it.—ANTHONY M. RUD.

QUITE a while ago one of you sent us a song said to have been written by a man whose whole family had been killed by Indians. It began:

> Minnehaha, laughing water,
> Cease thy laughing now, for oh
> Savage hands are red with slaughter
> Of the innocent to-day.

The following letter gives us the circumstances of its writing:

La Crosse, Wisconsin.

In reading over the Camp-Fire in *Adventure* I find a poem or song of the Minnesota Massacre very interesting.

MY FATHER was a settler in Trempealeau, County, Wisconsin, due east of Winona, Minn. This was in 1860. I was not born then but heard father speak about this as we grew up.

Lots of Indian trouble in Minnesota. The New Ulm Massacre. This poem or song was written at that time. There was, from Trempealeau County, a man by the name of Stevens, a settler at New Ulm, Minn. The Indians came on to him in the night. They massacred the whole family. He was the only one that escaped. They all ran for the cornfield, which was close to the cabin or small house, where they were all found and killed. This Stevens, badly wounded, found his wife, youngest born child, his oldest daughter in the cornfield and his son, Nelson by name, was lying at the garden gate.

Stevens got crazed and heart-broken, wandered to the Minnehaha Falls, where he sat down to rest, fell asleep, awoke in the morning some freshened up. While sitting a while he thought of such beautiful falls, also thinking about his family. The saying was he was speaking to the Minnehaha Falls when he composed the song or poem.

ALSO my father spoke about his neighbor a half-mile south of our place in Trempealeau County; Thompson was his name—kept a kind of an inn or stopping place.

The rumor was the Indians were crossing the Mississippi River at Winona and at La Crosse, Wis. The settlers at that time were few and far between. There was a couple got married two miles below our homestead and Thompson. A few gathered to shivaree the couple with tin pans, cowbells and guns. This Thompson heard the noise in the night, told his family the Indians were coming, got his team hitched to the wagon with hayrack on, as it was haying time, drove to Hixton at breakneck speed,

a distance of twelve miles, before he stopped and reported the Indians were down the valley.

Father said there was a picture in the newspapers, a Milwaukee sheet, with Thompson and his family on the hayrack going at breakneck speed so fast the horseshoes were coming off and flying in the air over his team.

I send you the poem or song as I learned it forty years ago.—SEBERT AMUNDSON.

AN OLD-TIMER comrade who has passed out and who sent his farewell to the "old gang:"

St. Paul, Minnesota.

"Colonel" Sam M. Badger, St. Paul, enlisted in the 4th Minnesota Volunteers in '61 at the age of 13 years, is dead. He was prospector and miner all over the Northwest and took part in some of the thrilling things. I was with Sam when he took the long trail and he asked me to let the old gang know. —T. GLENN HARRISON.

A LETTER from one of those who have asked that "Riley Grannan's Last Adventure" be printed by us a third time. It is at first glance amazing that a funeral sermon published in a fiction magazine should not only bring no kicks from readers but should be received with such enthusiasm that it had to be printed a second time and that a third printing is now being called for. Yet, on consideration, it is not amazing. As far back as human records extend man, no matter where or how low or high in civilization, has been groping for spirtual light. (To me it seems a sure proof that there *is* something to be groped for.) The groping brings to men all kinds of results, from hideous "heathen" idols to things spiritual in themselves, that more or less satisfy the gropers but do not stop the groping. The gropers divide into creeds often utterly at variance with one another—creeds that, quite unspiritually, fight among themselves, each convinced that all the others are wrong. We hear their attacks and arguments and are confused. Sometimes disgusted and despairful.

But sometimes, arising from almost any creed, there stands forth some one who concerns himself none at all with the wrangling among creeds, thinks of only what he finds in his own heart and tells it to us simply. He may be Catholic, Protestant, Scientist or Jew—even Mohammedan, Buddhist or any of the rest of them, but if he seeks only truth, seeks it with an open, sincere heart and tells it to us simply, we can find there something that helps even if it can be no final answer. He is trying to find God an is doing only that. We, too, most of us—however little we may acknowledge it and however long may be the lapses in our trying—are groping to find God, to find the spiritual answer to all our doubts and wonderings. So, when a man like this speaks, we listen and listen eagerly.

This sermon was preached over the body of a dead gambler to the "rough" men of a rough mining camp. The very existence of that camp was due to the greed for wordly riches. You, or the men themselves, would say that they didn't give a —— about religion. They didn't. But in their hearts they did care about the spiritual things for which most of us are groping. The proof is that they drank in that sermon as a man parched with thirst in a desert drinks water when it is held out to him. Some of them wept.

Is it, then, so amazing that we too listen to those words and want them in permanent form so that we can turn to them at will?

Vancouver, B. C.

There appeared in *Adventure* the funeral sermon that the Rev. Mr. Knickerbocker preached over Riley Grannan.

In these days of chaos there appears a certain distrust of the teachings of the modern ecclesiastical representatives that has resulted in the attitude of the majority of a passive resistance by staying away from the churches.

For those that are in doubt that sermon is the grandest exposition of what we may expect in the life beyond that has appeared in this century. The wonderful language, the human sympathy attached to it, and the clear expounding of the decent doctrines in language that even the most ignorant can understand is a credit to *Adventure* and the man who preached it.

So, please let us have it again, and this time I will not lose my copy.—SAM. J. GOTHARD.

IF YOU should like to have the original painting for a cover that may have pleased you we should be glad to have you bid upon it. No bid of less than ten dollars per cover considered. Send in your bid any time. Many of the older covers are on hand. Covers will be sent express collect to highest bidders about July first.—A. S. H.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader

In the last issue of each month are printed in full the friendly services of *Adventure* to readers: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons; Camp-Fire Stations, etc.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4, 5. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts
6, 7. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
8. Australia and Tasmania
9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
10. New Guinea
11. Philippine Islands
12. Hawaiian Islands and China
13. Japan
14—16. Asia. In Three Parts
17—24. Africa. In Eight Parts
25. Turkey and Asia Minor
26, 27. Balkans. In Two Parts
28. Scandinavia
29. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
30, 31. South America. In Two Parts
32. Central America
33, 34. Mexico. In Two Parts
35—41. Canada. In Seven Parts
42. Alaska
43. Baffinland and Greenland
44—48. Western U. S. In Five Parts
49—52. Middle Western U. S. In Four Parts
53—57. Eastern U. S. In Five Parts
Aviation
Tropical Forestry
Radio
Mining and Prospecting
Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
Salt and Fresh Water Fishing
Standing Information
Lost Trails

Hunting in British East Africa

HOW to go about getting yourself a couple of bull elephants:

Question:—"1. I want to know if you have to have a permit to hunt and carry firearms in British territory. If so how do you obtain it?

2. Do you think a man could make part of the expenses of an outfit trading? Is a .35-caliber autoloading Remington or a .250 Savage large enough for big game?

3. Will the British Government allow you to hunt elephants, or have they got a law forbidding it?

4. Is the Shire Valley a good place to hunt?

5. Can you refer me to a book that will give me useful information on the subject?

6. Would it be better to buy an outfit here or get it there?

Please don't publish my name."— —— ——, Pine Bluff, Ark.

Answer, by Mr. Beadle:—1. Yes; permit required to hunt and carry firearms. Latter obtained at customs on entry into country; former obtained from local collector or magistrate.

2. No earthly chance making trading pay unless you know both language and country. Should say .250 Savage large enough for big game.

3. Yes; Government allow shooting on license. Fifty dollars—unless it's been raised—permits two bull elephants and various assorted big buck; cows always protected.

4. Yes; Shire very good hunting-ground, I believe, although it's not my territory.

5. List of books enclosed.

6. Yes; much better and cheaper to buy outfit right there.

Thanks muchly for the lucidity of your questions. If there's anything else I can do drop a line along. It's a relief to meet fellows who know what they want!

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in alternate issues of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

Prospecting

STILL plenty of likely-looking rock up North, just waiting to be located by the right man:

Question:—"What I am thinking about is a prospecting trip out West. I don't know exactly where, but that is one thing I would like to have you tell me where the best prospecting would be found. And I would like to know if I could make the trip by motor-cycle; that is the way I would like to make it; but please tell me which method you think best.

By the time I get ready to start I will have saved up about five hundred dollars. Is that enough for a trip like that? What equipment would I need? The motor-cycle would cost two hundred and fifty dollars.

I would like to start next April or May. Is that a good time to start on such a trip?

Do you think we would have any success in prospecting? And please give me all other information that you think I ought to have that I have not asked you about."—Fred Bossy, Camp Eustis, Va.

Answer, by Mr. Shaw:—I think I can help you; at least I can give you the benefit of such experience as I have had in this line and hope it may serve as data from which to determine your course, one way or the other.

First as to locality in which to prospect: Since you are limited as to capital, your field is narrowed to some extent. Several of the Rocky Mountain States are still good fields, even though they have been "run over" by thousands of the fraternity even in my own recollection. Parts of Colorado; Nevada, Idaho; Utah; and southern Arizona, I can mention with specific locations, if you like? These places, however, have many working mines, and the ground has been more or less carefully searched. Man is fallible and strangely blind to the thing beneath his feet, and I've known of rich properties being found on a public road, traveled so hard that the vein croppings of the mine were rutted by wheels.

However, unless you should care to discuss the above later I'll acquaint you with at least two sections, where a tyro may have an even chance at a game that many tireless sourdoughs have played unsuccessfully among the hills for the span of their long, healthy, carefree lives.

1. Alaska: In spite of the millions taken from Alaska it is still a most prolific field. Placer and lode prospecting along the Bering beaches or the Yukon and its tributaries is still a good chance; but if, as I judge, you've had little or no experience I should not advise the "inside" nor the far north, especially on limited capital.

The section I can advise is southeastern Alaska. Any of the larger islands or the mainland. The country is tremendous in size and despite the lapse of time since mines there have been found and operated has hardly been scratched except in certain easily accessible sections. The country is rough and heavily timbered and mostly covered deeply with moss. Prospecting has been done from small boats or power launches, coasting the shores on the outlook for streams, which are searched for likely-appearing "float."

Prince of Wales Island, the largest of these islands which form a barrier for hundreds of miles along the coast, offers as good opportunities as any for a start. Get to Seattle by your cheapest method; motor-cycle is O.K., but roads not good in early Spring after getting into the mountains. Get the fare from where you are from your local station agent.

From Seattle get a ticket to Ketchikan (about $35 now). Plan to get most of your outfit at Ketchikan; you can get all you need, and the price is not much more than in Seattle, plus freight. You'll be able to size up your needs better on the ground, and won't have the bother of looking after a lot of dunnage on the steamer.

At Ketchikan (or you can go to Wrangel, next steamer-stop) you'll have to get a boat; I've fou d a sealing-boat equipped with sail, oars and bailer to be the best bet for small outfit. These sealers are very seaworthy, easily handled in a blow, and an 18-20 foot boat will take you anywhere with your camp outfit. Then work around Gravina Island (north or south) and strike across Clarence Strait for Prince of Wales Island.

Land at the head of any of the numerous bays or arms of the sea, pitch your tent and strike out in all directions from that as a base. Watch the stream-beds for float-quartz, the bare cliffs, the hills above timber-line. Watch all the beaches or shores of bays for quartz lodes running into the water. Some of the best properties up there were found that way; *viz*, the Sea Level Mine on Thorne Arm.

When going through timber, watch all lumps or projections of the ground that are moss-covered; and carry an iron rod (miner's spoon) to test them. You can tell by the "feel" whether it is quartz or country rock. If quartz, strip off the moss and look for colors.

The beauty of this locality is that when you do find good float (quartz showing one or more "colors" or gold that you can see with the naked eye) you can generally work the vein and pay your way with it from "grass-roots." You'll find plenty of copper-bearing veins also, but when you have staked such a claim you'll need to find capital to make a mine from it; unless you can find a buyer. The buyer, though, won't give you the price of a developed mine; he has to take the risk of the vein pinching, no matter how good the surface indications.

AFTER prospecting one section *thoroughly*, move camp to another, etc., etc. If you have no luck on the islands, don't neglect the mainland, say up the Behm Canal, or north toward Wrangel; and in no case lose your enthusiasm or hope!

No one is, or can ever be, a true prospector who doesn't firmly believe his fortune lies around the next bend, or in the next bay, or on the slope of that dim, blue mountain just visible from the tent door! Erase the word "discouragement" from your vocabulary, or don't start out!

This will do for a beginning, and you can branch out as you gain experience, confidence and familiarity with the work. If you can run upon an old-timer, get him to talk and to show you how to use a gold-pan. There is no placer in southeast Alaska, but the knowledge is valuable. I panned one hundred-dollar pans from the croppings of a rich streak in Helm Bay one time. These old-timers are canny and mighty good fellows if you are honest, sincere and careful not to seem a "know-it-all." You can pump them dry, if you flatter them a bit; then use your head, and you can sift out the wheat from the chaff.

I am adding a list of supplies with approximate costs. Prices are unstable now, but you'll find my estimates not far off in the gross. At least they will serve as a guide.

NOW there is another locality which would be good to try; one which I have often wanted to try myself, but of which I only know from hearsay, and mighty few details at that. This is the Porcupine country and north toward Hudson Bay, from Manitoba. It is rich silver ground and well worth looking at, but conditions for prospecting are a bit different from Alaska. For instance, you'd need a canoe (and know how to use it in whitewater) instead of a sealing-boat; and unless you holed up for the Winter months you'd need dogs and the experience of driving and caring for them. Anyway you will have to write to one of our "A.A." staff who is more familiar with that country than I am, for detailed information. Perhaps S. E. Sangster, L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. (Postage 3 cents.)

In this second locality, being Canadian territory, you'll need special information regarding Government regulations,which includes a tax on all mining claims and their output.

If you go to southeast Alaska you'll need oilers, jacket, pants and so'wester, for it rains there *quite much*,which you'll get used to after you've discovered webs growing between your toes. Your personal outfit need not cost you much if you have plenty of old clothes to wear out. My list will cover a new outfit with a heavy sweater, heavy hob-nailed boots (*not* knee-length) and several changes of *wool* underwear.

You'll need a good rifle; I should recommend a .30-40 Winchester, for there is fine big game there; and more bear than you ever heard of around the many salmon rivers; lots of ducks and geese, and deer in season.

You see, my grub list is for staples; your meats generally will come from your rifle and shotgun, your fishing-tackle (plenty of trout) and the beaches, where fine large clams abound. Also by setting a net attached to a buoy and with a chunk of meat *tied inside* when the tide is out, you can get all you need of big juicy crabs. Plenty of halibut, too, from the boat, or shore rocks with the proper tackle, heavy cod-line and hook, baited with a chunk of fresh salmon.

If you are really going, and want some details about all the above, I'll gladly give you the whole thing, including the way to use a gold-pan.

Fares (steamer to Ketchikan from Seattle)	$35
Seal-boat, complete (about)	75
Personal outfit, clothes, etc.	50
Tools, list below,	40
Provisions, one man for six months,	100
	$300

AS TO tools: For any amount of work you need a double-hand hammer of eight pounds, a single-hand hammer of four pounds, a miner's spoon, a light miner's pick and a prospectors' pick with twelve-inch handle, an assorted bunch of steel drills—seven-eighths-inch Jessup steel sharpened and tempered, a small portable forge with blower attached and around fifty pounds of dynamite to start with. This is in case you care to make any kind of stay at some base where the prospects look good.

For your *beginning* you'll need the prospector's pick; a geologist's hammer; a soft-iron rod; and some candles. These last you'll need anyway and are better for use in the tent than a lantern. You can get a patent tin case for a quarter.

Start with these last-named, and if you decide to make a permanent camp to *work* any vein, you can get the rest at Ketchikan, including the dynamite. A powder-boat makes monthly trips up the coast, so you can get it fresh at all times.

Therefore when you start from Ketchikan in the boat you can cut your total tool cost to about $5; your grub need be only for one month, $15 per month per man; and your personal outfit to whatever you need over what you bring with you. This will cut your total initial expense to less than $200, according to what your clothing outfit costs you. From what I have given you can figure your total expense quite easily.

JUST a word in closing this lengthy letter: Talk with all real miners and learn all you can about *rock*, how it looks and where it occurs; also the various sorts of quartz, milky and vitreous, and which is more apt to carry gold values; learn how to pan; when in the field assay all suspicious-looking rock, no matter how you find it in the ground.

There are assay offices in Ketchikan, and you can get there from most any of the places where you'll be, in a day or two. Prince of Wales Island is about sixty miles from Ketchikan.

Don't try to prospect, or even land, on Metlahkahtlah Island, to the southwest of Gravina; it is U. S. Reservation for the Siwash Indians of that tribe, and no one may prospect there.

Your start north from Seattle had best be made about the last of April or first of May, as the snow has by that time receded to the tops of the hills. This is the best virgin territory to be reached at slight cost, of which I know. Go to it, friend, and chances are even that you'll be lucky. If the cash gives out up there, get work in the mines—three dollars to four dollars per day—and go to it again. Persistency wins! Write to me direct again if you wish.

The above letters led to further correspondence:

Question:—"I am very thankful for your letter, telling me about the different prospecting countries and States. I am really going with a pal of mine, and the place that you think is best in the Rocky Mountain States for prospecting. I would like to have the route to go by motor-cycle, as I would rather go there for the start than to Alaska.

I have owned a motor-cycle more than half my life and sure love them. I have made many country trips on them before, and they always served me well. Tell me if you think I can go through the mountains with it and stay by it through the whole trip. I am a patient waiter, which would go toward making a good prospector out of me, wouldn't it?

Also give me a good route to Eagle Rock, California, from Chicago, Illinois, by motor-cycle. Is there any good prospecting in Mexico; and if so, what part? But wherever you tell me to go in the United States or Mexico for the prospecting-trip, that is where I will head because you know best.

The reason why I prefer a motor-cycle is because it is so convenient and can go into small places and take the mountain slopes so easily. You see, I will have a good strong side-car attached to it to carry the equipment. The kind of motor-cycle I am going to get is an Excelsior, twin cylinder, a big-valve type and very powerful.

Please tell me all about using miners' tools and especially the gold ore and how to assay the different rocks. Tell me all you know about mining and how to place a mine."—FRED BOSSY, Camp Eustis, Va.

Answer, by Mr. Shaw:—There are many places to prospect for gold in old Mexico—the east-central and southern portion of the state of Sonora, or the western portion of Chihuahua being the most easily accessible perhaps. Parts of Sonora offer the most chance, I think, but unfortunately the Yaqui Indians seem to have a deep-rooted prejudice against foreign prospectors. I happen to know that certain streams down there are as rich as Bonanza Creek ever was, coarse gold and plenty of it, but——

Beside there are still wandering bands of irregulars, guerillas, or bandits, who consider small parties of "whites," more particularly *Americanos*, as legitimate pickings. I most certainly can not advise a fellow countryman to venture into the Land of *Mañana* until political affairs are in a more settled state.

I am certainly flattered by your confidence, Mr. Bossy, but right here I wish to put you right on this little matter of "directions." You must know that if I should know of a place where I could placer gold running fifty cents a pan, or fifty cents a yard, or even much less, I'd hike right out there and stake everything in sight! Get me?

I DO KNOW of certain localities which are favorable for placer, also for quartz lodes which may carry values in gold, silver, copper, or lead, as the case may be; but the description of such localities must of necessity be mighty general. You'll note that I say *favorable*. I mean places where you might kick a million-dollar mine out with the toe of your boot (or your burro might do it with his hoof, as was the case with the Bunkerhill and Sullivan mine) or you may tramp the hills and wade the streams until your hair gets white without finding anything worth stopping over a day to work. The final success, if any, will depend solely upon your luck and your persistence, but principally upon your luck, since I see from your letter that you have had little actual experience.

However, don't let lack of prospecting experience and geological knowledge bar you from trying, if your courage is good. You say you are a "patient waiter." This is lucky, for you will need plenty of that commodity.

I'M GOING to advise you to make a start in the La Plata Mountains, fifteen or twenty miles west of Durango, Colorado. There are several places in other States to which I might direct you, but the La Platas are located centrally within a pretty large and heavily mineralized region; you'll have a shot at both lode and placer prospecting; it is reached fairly easily by motorcycle; and beside not costing too much to reach, you'll find an abundance of excellent camping-sites, with plenty of wood and fine water.

Nevada, or Arizona desert country is, as *Perlmutter* puts it, "something else again." Not safe for one unused to finding water by watching birds' actions or game signs, etc.

Sorry you don't like southeastern Alaska. It's right safe for any one, and is absolutely the most likely section of which I know. In default of that, the La Platas offer many opportunities.

At your local bookstore get automobile road-maps of Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas and Colorado. They have the clearest sort of directions, as you may know, and you can select your best and shortest route to Durango yourself. With a side-car you can camp along the way, carrying a small camp outfit, which will be handy later and which you can add to in Durango.

Write to the Chamber of Commerce in Durango for a claim map of the La Plata mining-district and folder giving mining laws. This will give you not only the lay of the land, but will show you the "open" territory, so that you run no danger of butting into another man's ground.

You will find good roads for a motorcycle clear into the hills. Select some open stretch of unexplored country and with a small outfit, say for a week, go there and pick out your camp-site, near water and where firewood is handy. Any place in that region where you find a camp-site is good enough for prospecting. When you have found your camp, then figure on whether you want to tent or put up a shack; make a grub-list, also tools; transport them in your side-car—you may get some rancher to haul them part way toward the foot-hills at a trifling cost—and get to work.

Select your camp-site pretty well up toward timber-line, I think, for your first camp. Take your small prospecting-pick and a lunch. Watch all streams for quartz "float;" that is, small pieces of white quartz which may contain mineral. Also examine carefully all paths of land-slides or snow-slides. These are frequent in the high Sierras, and because they scour off everything down to bed-rock afford a fine chance to discover a vein heretofore covered from sight.

The rock formation—"country rock"—of that section is sandstone, granite and schistose rocks, which you will soon learn to recognize. The veins lie sometimes as "contacts," between two different kinds of rock such as granite and sandstone, or as true fissures which cleave straight through any one kind.

THE veins of quartz where they show on surface (croppings) may show for only a short distance, being covered with earth or rock. Sometimes the croppings will show as a dirty yellowish or reddish stained rock cutting through the country rock. Pick around all such carefully and thoroughly.

Any strange-looking mineral must be examined. If the rock feels heavy and has an odd, greasy-looking gray mineral, have it assayed; it might be gray copper or a telluride ore.

There is quite a bit of the tellurium ores in this section. They run high in gold and silver as a rule, and if roasted on a shovel in a common coal fire the gold will bubble out from the rock surface in tiny yellowish drops. Sprinkle the surface first with common salt; it will hold the bubbles and prevent them from dropping off.

This country has free gold also, so look for tiny flecks or wires in the quartz. Of course these may be only pyrites, but you can tell easily with the point of a pocket-knife; the pyrites will crumble, but the gold will leave a depression and *feel* soft.

It will do no hurt to try your hand with a gold-pan in the streams, but there is no placer in the hills; if you get any "colors" it would merely be metal float from some vein higher up the stream and serve as a guide to the same. I'll tell you later about panning.

IF YOUR quartz float has sharp edges the parent vein will probably be fairly close. Remember, it may have rolled from cliffs above or have been carried down by snow-slide or land-slide. If the float has smoother, rounder edges, it has come from some distance. In either case, take the piece and hunt for more like it, *above* where you found it. The nearer you come to the parent vein the more of these pieces you will find.

If you find a likely piece in the bottom of some gulch, hunt along up the bottom for more. If none appear, go back and start up the sides of the gulch on either hand.

When you find a vein, *no matter how small* (I found one only an inch wide from which $24,000 was taken by two men in one month, from an open cut ten feet deep and forty feet long) take a lot of samples from different parts, especially next the walls, where the vein joins the country rock, and have them assayed. The local assayer in Durango will do this for about a dollar.

Don't think of doing any assaying for yourself. Even if you were a chemist, the necessary apparatus would not be practical for you to carry, although a well-equipped party who didn't care for expense might do so.

When you find a vein carrying mineral values, put a stake on it. Cut a stick about three inches through and three feet long and flatten one side for writing in pencil. Give the claim a name; then add—

"I claim 1500 feet on this vein; 000 feet northerly (or westerly, etc.) and 000 feet southerly (or easterly, etc., as the case may be) with one hundred and fifty feet on each side from this discovery stake."

Then sign your name, and give the date.

When this stake is securely set, pace off your several distances as accurately as you can, and set your four corner stakes, writing on each its proper designation, such as—

"N.W. corner Coyote Claim." Later if you wish to go ahead and work it you can have it surveyed properly. Now go to the Land Office in Durango and record your claim; they'll tell you how, and the cost will be around two or three dollars.

You'll hardly need drills and dynamite at first. If you want to prospect some vein more thoroughly than by knocking off samples with a pick, you could have a set of three drills in graduated sizes from 10 inches to 18 inches, and one of 2 feet—get them sharpened and tempered by some Durango blacksmith—and buy half a dozen sticks of ⅞ Hercules or Repauno powder, with a box of XX caps and a half-coil (50 feet) of white fuse.

You'll need a four-pound hammer, "single-jack" and a miner's spoon for removing drillings from the drill hole. Get some miner to show you how to use this outfit, then go to it and use your patience. If you care to get work in a mine for a while, you can pick up a lot that way.

PROSPECT all the country around you within easy walking-distance; then if you find nothing good move camp and try again. If you find anything worth locating you will have to get a pick, shovel, drills, powder, caps and fuse and excavate a ten-foot "face" on the vein—expose the vein for ten feet vertically—or sink a ten-foot shaft to comply with the mining law. You are allowed—if my memory serves—thirty days to file after staking; then sixty days to perfect location; that is, to do ten feet of work; *viz.*, ten-foot face, ten-foot tunnel or ten-foot shaft.

This will hold the claim for the rest of the year, but the following year and each succeeding year you must do at least $100 worth of work on it to hold it; that is, ten feet of work, since the mining law allows $10 per foot for such work.

Should you want to placer, you can reach a place from where you are in the La Platas with your motorcycle. It is on the lower San Juan River, some day or two from Bluff City. These are bench placers—up from the river—and you'll have to pack water from the river for panning, or take your dirt to the river and pan it there; this unless you have the ingenuity to devise some scheme to bring water to the work.

You'll have to descend cliffs, perhaps by rope. Winter climate is mild. I've never panned any of this dirt, but men I know and can trust tell me that you can make day's wages almost anywhere down among those cliffs on the lower river.

There has been quite a bit of oil-prospecting around Bluff. There are quite a few uranium deposits in that section; in fact, that is worth trying

for, as it beats a gold-mine if you win. Uranium is the ore from which radium is extracted. It is bright canary yellow in color—looks like yellow chalk—and lies in flat or irregular lenses, not in veins.

A word about panning. The gold-pan is sheet iron, about 18 to 20 inches across, with flat bottom and sloping sides about 2½ inches high. Keep it clean; get no grease in it.

Take a double handful of river sand or mud in the pan; submerge it in water, tipped slightly forward—that is, with the forward edge under water so that the contents are fully submerged—then give the pan a gentle rotary motion, allowing the lighter material in the pan to flow slowly out over the forward edge; stir frequently with the finger; repeat the process with the slightly heavier sand which comes next, being careful to hold the edge of the pan up enough to prevent any of the possible gold from dribbling out with the sand; shake and wash all the lighter sand out of the pan; and if you are panning likely ground there will appear some black sand at the very bottom—just a small quantity. You must be extra careful when you wash this clean!

Then by tilting quickly to one side with a small amount of water in the pan, you can string the black sand out in a thin thread around the bottom edge, and any gold will show at the point of this black-sand thread. It may need a magnifying-glass to see—such a glass should form part of your equipment—or if you are in rich dirt it will be seen by the naked eye. I've panned dirt that strung a solid line of flour gold completely around the pan.

This is already too long a letter, but it's a difficult matter to reply to your questions very briefly. Don't be discouraged whatever luck you have. Men have spent long lives at this game. It's like a poker-game; and you may have beginner's luck.

If you want any other questions answered, I'll do my best. In any case I wish you good fortune, and I'm sure you'll have the time of your life anyway. Plenty of game, trout and fur around the La Platas.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Heligoland

"WE'VE put our money on the wrong horse," the late Lord Salisbury is reported to have said a few years after Great Britain had made the trade described in the subjoined correspondence. And the World War proved it:

Question:—"I would like to know who owns Heligo Land. Was it ever used for anything else other than for a fortification?

I enclose stamps for reply."—E. D. HORNBACK, Missoula, Mont.

Answer, by Mr. Fleischer:—Heligoland (Helgoland) is a small island in the North Sea, a rock rather, off the coast of Germany.

This island was exchanged by Great Britain for the island of Zanzibar to Germany in 1890. The Germans set to work immediately to fortify the island and make it a torpedo-boat station and later a submarine base. Only the southern part of the island is inhabited—by fisher-folk—and was a Summer resort and bathing-town.

The Treaty of Versailles stipulated the complete dismantling of the fortifications, and this has been accomplished. Heligoland today is nothing more than a bathing-resort with steamer connections, so-called bathing-steamer service from Bremen and Hamburg.

Chesuncook

YOU'RE welcome to the free ad., Mrs. Grindle:

Question:—"My buddy and myself are thinking of making a hunting and fishing trip into Maine. We intend to make a two or three weeks' trip. We would like to get to a place where a canoe can be used. Where would you advise us to go? We would like a place that is not crowded.

Is it possible to get to Chesuncook Lake by canoe up the Penobscot River? If so are there many carries or portages? Are they long?

How are hunting and fishing in that region? What varieties? Would you recommend this trip? Please tell a desirable outfit for a trip of this nature."—HARVEY STUBBLEBINE, Reading, Pa.

Answer, by Dr. Hathorne:—Chesuncook would be a good place to go for a hunting-trip, but the fishing-season closes when the hunting-season opens; that is, October 1st. I could hardly advise you to try to make Chesuncook by going up the Penobscot. It could be done but it would mean a whole lot of hard work and expense in getting there. It would be much better to go to Greenville by train, then take stage to the foot of Chesuncook Lake.

Or you could go to Rockwood Station on Moosehead Lake, then a steamer up the lake to Northeast Carry, go over the carry to the west branch of the Penobscot and down to Chesuncook. This makes a good trip. If you cared to you could make your return by going down the west branch to Norcross, where you could get your train.

For an outfit you would need a good tent, wool, and rubber blankets, cooking-outfit for two, guns and ammunition, and your personal needs. You could get all your supplies of grub there at the lake.

It would be necessary for you to employ a guide if you camped. If you stop at a hotel or sporting camp you would not be compelled to hire the guide.

There are several places on or near where you could secure board, and the big game is as plenty as any place in the State. If you write to Mrs. Addie Grindle, Chesuncook, Me., she will give you prices for board.

Andrea the Swordmaker

THOUGH an Italian, his fame rests on the Scotch claymore, of which he turned out the best examples. And a claymore, by the way, isn't at all the type of sword most of us think it to be:

Question:—"I should be much obliged if you would give me some information as to Andrea Ferrara, the swordmaker. Perhaps you will be good enough to let me know:

When and where he held out.

What his connection was with Scotland, if any.

What type of sword he made; or had he a variety?

I ask, because I happen to have an Andrea Ferrara sword and am curious to know the connection between the maker and Scotland, from which country it is said to have come. I enclose a rough sketch of the hilt as well as sketches of the markings on the blade, Andrea being on the one side and Ferrara on the other, in large letters. I should be glad to know whether these markings accord with any you have seen on swords by this maker, I suppose the weapon I have belongs to the seventeenth century.

Kindly see that my name is not published in the magazine."— —— ——, Harrodsburg, Ky.

Answer, by Mr. Barker:—Andrea di Ferrara was a native of Italy, and lived during the seventeenth century, at which time his sword-blades and those of Antonio Picinino were held in the highest esteem of all Italian makers, and equally with those of any maker in the world. In fiction Ferrara's name seems to be far more known and used than that of Picinino.

He had no connection with Scotland. If I may hazard a guess, I imagine that you ask that from seeing in some story a Scotchman with an Andrea Ferrara blade.

While it is perfectly possible for a Scotchman to have such, the average writer puts it in his hand more than any other owing to the following misapprehension, which is common to all but students of ancient arms, and to some of them:

Ninety-nine people out of a hundred, knowing anything at all about swords (and not all) if asked what a Scotch claymore was, would immediately tell you it was a heavy sword with a basket hilt of iron. The finest of such swords having been made by Ferrara, and the claymore being peculiarly a Scottish weapon, you can readily see the supposed connection.

Now as a matter of fact the real Scotch claymore had a plain cross-guard, and not the basket hilt which protected the whole hand. The latter were used in Ferrara's day only by the Venetians, and were called *schiavone*, and were the weapon used by the Doge's guards in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Scotland they were not known till the eighteenth century.

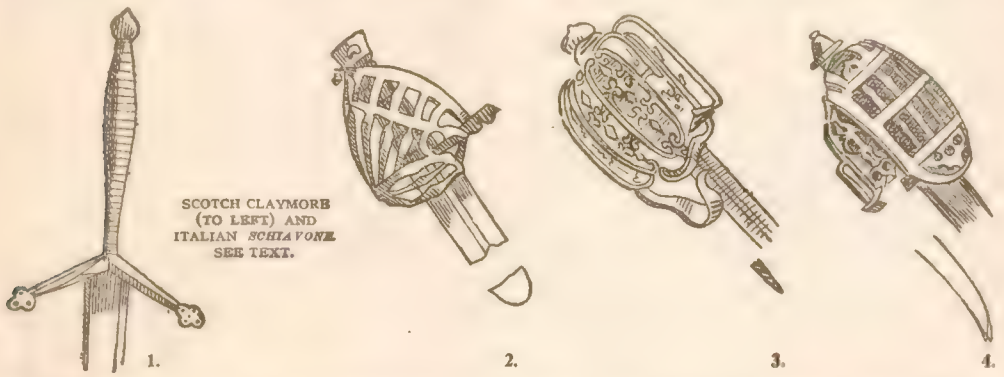
I am enclosing tracings of drawings, the originals of which I am sending to the magazine. No. 1 is the real Scotch claymore. No. 2 is a Venetian sword 2 feet, 9 inches long, made by Ferrara, and is stamped with the winged lion of Venice, being used in the seventeenth century. No. 3 is the same, and is in the Musée d'Artillerie de Paris, where it is erroneously described as a claymore.

In the eighteenth century they had come into use by all nations as cavalry swords, being particularly affected by Scottish troops, an example of one of which I have drawn for No. 4.

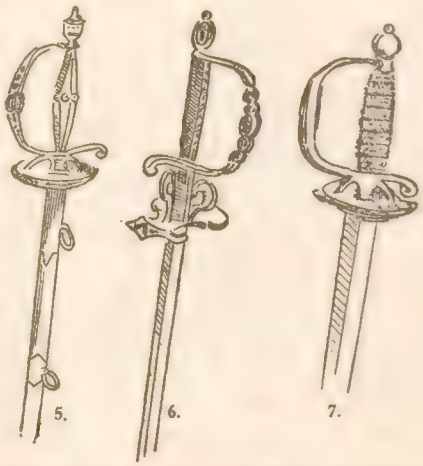
Ferrara made other types of swords.

The markings you speak of and send me copies of on your Andrea di Ferrara sword are similar to such as I have seen on others by that mastermaker. It being on the two sides is, of course, explained by the fact that Andrea was a person's name, and Ferrara the name of a place. Hence, too, the "di," when it occurs.

Your weapon is undoubtedly of the seventeenth century. Such was the maker's reputation that swords of his manufacture found their way to all countries and lands.



SCOTCH CLAYMORE (TO LEFT) AND ITALIAN *SCHIAVONE*. SEE TEXT.



COURT SWORDS, PERIOD OF LOUIS XV AND LOUIS XVI OF FRANCE. SEE TEXT.

I am also enclosing you three sketches of court swords (Nos. 5, 6, 7) similar to yours.

No. 5 is a court sword of period Louis XV (1715-1774) in polished iron or steel cut in facets. This

sword is now to be found in the Merville Collection.

No. 6, same period, in steel, with gilt ornament and with a *pas d'ane* of a peculiar shape. Same source.

No. 7 is a court sword, period Louis XVI, (1778-1793) in steel. Same source. Many of these swords were made, varying but little in shape.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

South Sea Authors

A KNOCK and a boost:

Question:—"A few days ago I got a few second-hand copies of *Adventure* and found several of your letters on Tahiti. And I want to say that they are the best I have seen yet.

But I want to take exception to your referring any one to the books by O'Brien, Freeman and others. They are mostly a lot of —— rot. And especially "The Lone Path," by Angus McGregor (that is, Freeman). I consider him a —— liar. I have read everything of his so far, and according to my figures he is in the neighborhood of one hundred and fifty years old. He claims to have been a trader in the early days. No man who was such could go through what he claims to have been unless he was a young man. Jack London did the same trick, and because I said it was not so, his wife jumped on my neck.

I am a native of New Zealand and was almost raised in Fiji, so there are very few can tell me much about those parts. But I know nothing about Tahiti but what I am able to get from letters, etc. While Darling was alive I corresponded with him. The trouble with the books is, they are mostly a rehash; very little original stuff.

There are two questions I would like to ask you, viz:

1. Do you know where the Valley of Vaitia is? How far from Papeete?

2. Do you know or can you find out if it is possible to take a rifle and shotgun to Tahiti?

I have been trying to get there for quite a while, but every time I think I am near ready something comes up and knocks it out. But if no bad luck intervenes I will soon be in a position to go with three thousand to five thousand dollars cash and eight hundred to one thousand dollars per year for the balance of my life.

I am like all the other fellows who write you—tired of hard work. But have sense enough not to go without money enough to live as I want. Pardon me if I have taken up too much of your time."—— ——, Arlington, Wash.

Answer, by Mr. C. Brown, Jr.:—I do not think that you are at all fair in your judging. You say: "I know nothing about Tahiti but what I am able to get from letters, etc." Then please tell me why do you condemn Frederick O'Brien, Lewis R. Freeman and Jack London—who was my good friend? If you know nothing about Tahiti, how can you possibly say that the books of the above writers are *"mostly a lot of —— rot"?* And how can you expect me to take what you say in regard to the work I am doing for *Adventure?*

I can quite understand the attitude taken by Mrs. Jack London. The other week, just before she sailed from San Francisco on a Swedish motor-ship for Europe, we had occasion to write of Jack London's visit to Tahiti. The one thing I found myself emphasizing was the veracity of Jack London's Tahiti writings.

Another thing. Permit me to say that jovial Frederick O'Brien has written the most original book on Tahiti, "Mystic Isles of the South Seas." It's some book, it is. A companion to this book is Lewis R. Freeman's "In the Track of the Trades." I recommend heartily the two of them.

So that's what I think of Frederick O'Brien, Jack London and Lewis R. Freeman.

Concerning your Tahiti queries. The valley you speak of, Vaitia Valley, is but a few kilometers from Papeete. You can take firearms into Tahiti.

If you want an answer, read the rules.

Nevada

THE following is the third of a series of half a dozen leaflets that Brother Harriman has had us print up for him dealing with the six States in his charge. Any leaflet, or the whole six of them, may be obtained by applying to him, provided request is accompanied by self-addressed envelop and stamp. Don't expect an answer otherwise.

The first leaflet printed for Brother Harriman, by the way, described California, and appeared in the April 10 issue of our magazine. The second, which discussed Arizona, was published in the May 20 issue:

NEVADA has less to offer the settler than any other of the six I represent. She has gone backward with the years instead of forward. Towns that once held large populations are now struggling along with a fraction of their old number. Which proves my first sentence.

The population of Nevada, according to the 1910 census, was only 81,875, about what one city held in 1860.

Nevada is a desert State, and it carries the desert idea further than either of the others, though all have desert areas. In the three coast States the desert areas are matched by tremendously fertile and well-watered areas, by great forests and many streams.

Nevada's fertile, well-watered areas are small, even counting those now irrigated. Her mineralized areas are all that have kept her before the public; and they, while rich in many places, are now producing to such a small amount that the total makes no ripple in the news.

Nevada with abundant water could rise to great heights, but the water seems impossible to secure. If the Boulder Cañon Dam is built there will be a large section of Nevada reclaimed. That will help the State materially. There is plenty of good soil in the north if it had water. It has not and will not have.

Mining and stock-raising are about all the important industries in Nevada. And these are not large by comparison with Arizona or California. The area of Nevada is 109,000 square miles.—E. E. HARRIMAN.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Compadre Lieut. Roland Birnn, down in France Field, Canal Zone, sends me the following bit of swashbuckling verse, which certainly deserves a run for its money in this column. Birnn says he stumbled on it some years ago and hands it in for the good of the sitters-in round the Camp-Fire. Here she is:

The Gaycat

I'm a Prushun for a bimmy, I'm a gaycat for a bo;
Never had a bit o' learnin'; guess I'm just plain vile and low.
I don't think I ever had a home, and 'spect I never will;
Far back as I can remember, guess I been down in the swill.
Born, I guess, in some dark alley, swiped by Gipsies off the street,
Foll'rin' them around the crop-camps, from York hops to Kansas wheat.
They was pinched one day in Cleveland; I was left alone at ten;
Grabbed by chinks to run their hop-paste from the pedler to the den.
Growin' older, gettin' wiser, never knowed to be afraid
Till the night the bulls used pistols in a noisy framed-up raid.
I got scared; the mornin' saw me riding rods to Buffalo;
Saved there in the Union Station by the kindness of a bo—
"Mooney Ike;" he croaks a train-bull, drops him neat an' clean an' fair—
When he see the train-bull beat me, Ike, he up an' parts his hair.
After that, why, Ike he takes me, trains me for to be his cat,
Swappin' tears fer lousy hand-outs, gettin' cunnin' as a rat.
One day he slips; the wheels they get him; —— Joe, the filthy scum,
Grabs me fer to be *his* gaycat, starves me, beats me, treats me bum.
Uses me fer ev'ry poipus, threatens me he'll do me hoit,
Till the rotten way he treats me makes me lower than the doit.
I'm growin' big, he's growin' older; some fine day—well, good-by, Joe.
Then *I'll* pick meself a gaycat, then *I'll* be a jungle bo.

My best thanks to Compadre E. E. Harriman of Los Angeles for ditty entitled "Dat Yallah Gal in Texas," popular with the lumberjacks in the Minnesota lumber belt in the '70s. Here she goes:

Dat Yallah Gal in Texas

Dere's a yallah gal in Texas dat dis dahky's gwine to see.
No uddah dahky co'ts heh, no uddah only me;
An' she cried so when Ah lef' heh, dat it almos' broke mah haht,
An' if we evah meet again, we nevah mo' shall paht.

Chorus.

She's de prettiest gal ob colah dat dis dahky ebah knew.
Heh eyes am lak de di'mon', an' dey spahkle lak de dew.
You may talk about yo' dearest, yo' may sing ob Rosalie,
But dat yallah gal in Texas beats de belles ob Tennessee.
Wheah de Rio Grande am flowin' an' de Summah skies ah bright,
We walk along togeddah in de stahry Summah night;
An' Ah sho'ly does remembah how we pahted long ago,
An' Ah promised to come back again an' nevah leave heh so.—*Cho.*
An' now Ah'm gwine to fin' heh; fahwell to all mah wo;
We'll sing de songs togeddah dat we sang so long ago;
An' Ah'll play de banjo gaily, w'ile we sing de songs ob yo'e,
Foah dat yallah gal in Texas will be mine fo'ebbahmo'.—*Cho.*

Compadre F. B. Taylor of Smith's Falls, Ontario, Canada, and Compadre James Cummins of Woodhaven, L. I., New York, send me the verses of "Three Leaves of Irish Shamrock" which apparently is old enough to vote.

Three Leaves of Irish Shamrock

In leaving dear old Ireland, in the merry, month of June,
The birds were sweetly singing; all Nature was in bloom
When an Irish girl accosted me with a teardrop in her eye,
And as she spoke these words to me she bitterly did cry:
"Kind sir, I'll ask a favor, and grant it to me, please.
It's not much I'll ask of you; it will set my heart at ease.
Take these to my brother Ned, who's far across the sea,
And don't forget to tell him, sir, that they were sent by me.

Chorus: "They're the three leaves of shamrock, the Irishman's shamrock,
From his own darling sister, a blessing to him gave.
So take them to my brother, for I have no one other,
For they're the three leaves of shamrock, from his dear old mother's grave.

"Tell him since he went away, how bitter was our lot.
The landlord came one Winter's day, and turned us from our cot.
Our troubles they were many, and friends were very few;
And, brother dear, your mother used to often speak of you.
'My darling boy, come back again,' she used to often say.
At last one day she was taken sick, and then was laid away.
Her grave I've watered with my tears; that's where these flowers grew,
And, brother dear, they're all I've got, and them I send to you."—*Cho.*

Compadre George G. Butler, 691 Home Avenue, Akron, O., sends me an interesting bit of war verse entitled "The Rookie"—great stuff. Thanks, Bro. Butler—we hope to run it one of these days.

Compadre G. Schuppert of Tampico, Tamps, Mexico, sends me in a good bit of stuff entitled "The Tramp," which I'm glad to run herewith. Thanks, Bro. Schuppert.

A Tramp

Let me sit down a minute—a stone got into my shoe.
Now don't commence your cursing; I have done nothing to you.
Yes, I'm a stranger. What of it? Folks say we ain't no good;
But tramps have to live, I reckon, though folks don't think we should.
Once I was strong and handsome, had plenty of cash and clothes—
That was before I tippled, and gin got into my nose.
Down in the Lehigh Valley me and my people grew.
I was a blacksmith, captain; yes, a good one, too.
Me and my wife and Ella; Ella was just sixteen.
She was the prettiest girlie the valley had ever seen.
Beaus! Why, she had many, had them from near and far;
But they were workmen and farmers; none of them suited her.
Then came an Army lieutenant, young, handsome and tall.
Damn him! I wish I had him strangled, here against this wall.
He was the man for Ella; she didn't know any ill.
Mother, she tried to stop it, but you know a young girl's will.
Well, it's the same old story—common enough, you will say.
He was a smooth-tongued devil and got her to run away.
More than month thereafter we heard from the poor young thing;
He had gone away and left her, without a wedding-ring.
Back to her home we brought her, back to her mother's side;
Filled with a raging fever she fell at my feet and died.
Frantic with shame and with sorrow, her mother began to sink—
Dead in less than a fortnight; that's when I took to drink.
Give me just one glass, colonel, then I'll be on my way;
I will tramp till I find the scoundrel, if it takes till Judgment Day. —*Anonymous.*

Mrs. G. M. Booth, 111 West Street, Reno, Nevada, one of our enthusiastic sitters-in at the Camp-Fire, would like to be put on the track of the following songs, all of which are unknown to me: "The Law That Makes the Millionaire Is the Law That Makes the Tramp," "There'll Be No Distinction There Till We Meet Again," "Take Me Home to the Place Where I First Saw the Light," or the "Sweet Sunny South," "The Valleys Verdure-Clad," "Stay on the Farm," and three instrumental bits entitled "The Lowell Band March," "The Woodruff Waltz," "Sweet Home Waltz." This is not exactly a department for instrumental music, but we can't refuse Mrs. Booth just the same.

If Compadre George Johnson, the Canadian traveling man who sent me the song "Shorty" used to sing "over there," will send me his exact address I'll be glad to send him the correct version just received from Compadre N. G. Ladd, of Galt, Ontario. We have to be a bit careful about the stuff we reprint. Sometimes we are liable to run into copyright difficulties. This makes it important for our bunch to send me the name of the author and the publisher of any song they send in, so we may watch our step.

Send your old songs or requests for 'em, to ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 745 Riverside Drive, New York. Do not send questions to this magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

JUNE 30TH ISSUE

THE MISDEAL A Complete Novelette — *W. C. Tuttle*
Honest rustlers.

THE RAT-CATCHER A Complete Novelette — *Viola Ransom Wood*
The game-cock breeder's vengeance.

THE MYTH-KILLERS A Four-Part Story Part I — *Hugh Pendexte*
The beginning of a great struggle for supremacy along the Mississippi between the French and English.

"WHO FIRES FIRST?" Pirate Tales from the Law—Gow
A ship-load of villains who felt the call of home. **A Complete Novelette** — *Arthur M. Harris*

MAD WELLS — *Charles Victor Fischer*
The radio vision of a sailor.

BULGY SMITH—EXPATRIATE — *Roy Snider*
Buried treasure in Bermuda.

THE BITTER EGG-PLANT — *H. A. Noureddin Addie*
Kurd against Turk—and a debt that was paid.

HURRICANE WILLIAMS' VENGEANCE Conclusion — *Gordon Young*
"Amid the rigging a black speck dangled like a spot against the sun."

IVORY TREK — *Douglas M. Dold*
Danger lurked at every step in the trackless Belgian Congo.

THE MASTER OF THE DJINNOON An Incident in the Affairs of Mohamed Ali
Black magic. — *George E. Holt*

THE WANDERINGS OF JAMES PATTIE — *Frederick P. Bechdolt*
Intrepid explorers of the old West.

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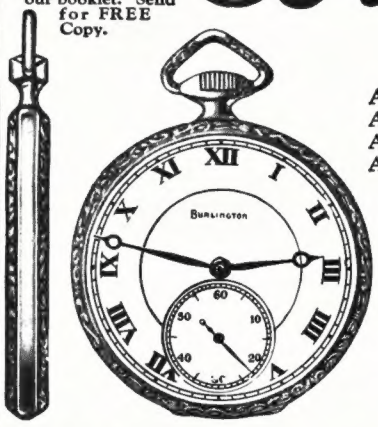

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Which Girl is

"The Lost Diana"?

YOU will ask yourself that question many times as you read this fascinating story by Inez Haynes Irwin in EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE for June. There are four girls who might be the missing Diana—the heiress who disappeared mysteriously from her guardian's home a few weeks before she was to inherit twenty million dollars. Or was Diana murdered by her guardian? You can't decide. You hurry through the story anxious for the end and yet intent on each important incident. Who was spying on the garden at the oriel window? Why did the girl in the garden wear a wig over her bobbed hair? "The Lost Diana" is full of mystery and excitement. Read it to-day in

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